LOKAMANYA TILAK



Bal Gangadhar Tilak

1908

LOKAMANYA TILAK

Father of Indian Unrest

and

Maker of Modern India

D. V. TAHMANKAR

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To
Bapusaheb and
Vahini Godbole

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FOREWORD

The whole of India thrilled to Lokamanya Tilak's famous slogan "Swaraj is my birthright and I will have it". To my generation it was the flaming torch which led us out of the darkness and frustration of the period into light and liberty and life.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak lived in a dynamic era of India's history and made his contribution in dynamic terms. He was, in the words of Mahatma Gandhi, "the Maker of Modern India".

Like the facets of a diamond there were many sides to his brilliance. He was a scholar of deep learning and culture and neither politics nor prison prevented him from enriching Marathi literature by his well known *Gita Rahasya* and other works.

His passionate belief in the cause he espoused and in the methods he advocated led to considerable controversy in his day and Mr. D. V. Tahmankar, the author, gives a vivid account of contemporary events and debates in his study, *Lokamanya Tilak*. These things are, however, now chapters of history, and the student who wishes to acquaint himself with the political trends of the period and understand the background from which the Indian freedom movement emerged, will find in this book material that is valuable and interesting.

VIJAYA LAKSHMI PANDIT

India House
London
June 1956

PREFACE

Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak was born a hundred years ago and died thirty-six years back in 1920. Is his memory worth commemorating? Or has he ceased to excite our living interest?

These questions were answered for me by a literary agent when I called to show him my manuscript. "Is your book anti-British?" he asked me. "You know, Mr. Tilak was the greatest enemy of our Empire." The agent's question convinced me beyond any doubt that Tilak was not a figure belonging to the past, a mere museum piece, but a "live" contemporary like Sir Winston Churchill and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the mention of whose names gives rise to lively controversies and stirs our emotions. Mere lapse of time does not affect the human interest in the makers of history; it is not so much the physical presence as the vitality and force of their ideas which make them our contemporaries. Tilak belonged to that small minority of men who are ageless and timeless, who possess a lasting interest for us and evoke warm affection or bitter hatred—an unmistakable sign of contemporaneity.

I found it as difficult to write dispassionately about Tilak as it would be to write about Mahatma Gandhi or Pandit Nehru. Like them he dealt with issues which are still with us and move us emotionally. Throughout his life he fought for man's right to control his own destiny—a fight still going on in many parts of the world and likely to continue for generations to come.

The hundred years since Tilak's birth saw Britain reach the zenith of her imperial glory and then, as her rule became less secure, call in repression to her aid. In India, the cornerstone of her Empire, there were stirrings of restless nationalism and a growing thirst for liberty. But how was liberty to be won? Who was to bell the cat? There was no answer to these questions until Tilak appeared on the political horizon and broke the hypnotic spell of

British supremacy and prestige. Through his personal sacrifices and sufferings he inspired the people with a spirit of resurgent nationalism which developed in them a militant psychology and forced the British to leave India eventually. Once the Indian Empire was at an end, other empires, like the Dutch and the French, collapsed too, and Asia was free of European domination.

In *Lokamanya Tilak* I have attempted to present a study of the man and his times, which is being published on the occasion of his Birthday Centenary. I am well aware of the deficiencies and drawbacks of the book, which are in the nature of things almost unavoidable. No adequate biography of Tilak can be written so long as the vital records in the custody of the old India Office remain inaccessible to Indian research students. I sincerely hope, however, that inadequate as it is, my attempt will still be of some help in understanding the life and work of a man who was more than a political personality and who influenced, in no inconsiderable measure, the course of modern history, especially of Indo-British relations.

I should like to express my sincere thanks to Her Excellency Mrs. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, High Commissioner for India, in London. In spite of the heavy burden of her office she found time to write a foreword to my book and has placed me thereby under a deep debt of obligation.

A book of this nature could not be written without the co-operation of many friends. In this respect I acknowledge with gratitude the liberal help and encouragement I received from the Trustees of the Kesari-Mahratta Trust of Poona—Shri J. S. Karandikar, Shri L. B. Bhopatkar, and Shri J. S. Tilak, the editor of *Kesari* and grandson of the Lokamanya.

Shri Karandikar's help was of special importance. He brought to bear on the manuscript his intimate knowledge of Tilak and greatly enhanced the authenticity of the book. Shri B. G. Khaparde of Amaraoti placed at my disposal his father's correspondence with Tilak, and Shri Gangadharrao Deshpande of Belgaum allowed me to make full use of his unpublished diaries. Dr. B. A. Saletore, Director of National Archives of India, secured for me permission of the Indian authorities to quote from Government records. Mr. D. Barve, the Librarian of the Kesari-Mahratta Trust Library,

helped me greatly by procuring for me books on Tilak which had been out of print for a long time. I acknowledge their assistance and help with deep gratitude.

I tender my sincere thanks to H.H. The Maharao of Kutch, Shri P. K. Divekar of Bombay, Shri G. G. Dandekar of Bhivandi, Bombay State, and H.E. Shri R. R. Diwakar, Governor of Bihar, for their most valuable and generous support in enabling me to carry out research in connection with this book.

Mr. Arthur Ellis, C.B.E., M.A., F.S.A., read the manuscript and made valuable suggestions for which I am most thankful to him. I have also to thank the staff of the India Office Library for the unfailing courtesy and co-operation in making available to me books and references on Tilak. Another friend who made my book his own concern and helped me in preparing the press copy and in reading the proofs is Mr. Charles Seaton of the *Spectator*. I am most grateful to him for his ungrudging help and co-operation. And lastly I offer my sincere thanks to Sir John Murray, K.C.V.O., D.S.O., who accepted my manuscript for publication in the midst of the printing dispute and brought out the book in time for the Centenary occasion.

D. V. TAHMANKAR

London, July 1st, 1956

PRELUDE

> Hands of invisible spirits touch the strings
> Of that mysterious instrument, the soul,
> And play the prelude of our fate.
>
> LONGFELLOW

Although it was the monsoon season, the morning sun rose over the city of Bombay with all the splendour of the East. The people woke from sleep and went quietly about their work as usual: some to the Government Offices in the old Secretariat, others to do business in the Fort and many more to work in the new cotton mills (set up by Indian and British private enterprise). It was July 27th, 1897—to all appearances just one more day in the humdrum life of the people of Bombay.

Little indeed did they guess that before the sun went down into the Arabian Sea that evening they were fated to be unwitting witnesses of the first clash in a decisive struggle between History and Destiny, which was to mean the end of the British Raj in India. For it was on this day that Mr. John Sanders Slater, the Chief Presidency Magistrate in Bombay, signed a warrant for the arrest of one Bal Gangadhar Tilak, destined before long to be known all over India as "Lokamanya" (Beloved leader of the people). Slater stood for the established power of the British Empire, and behind him the most powerful navy and army in the world. Tilak stood for a defeated and conquered nation which, all the same, was proud of its great past and fired by the will to independence. The Englishman stood for the status quo: the Indian for a future of limitless promise. Fate had placed in Tilak's hands the threads of India's fate, and the weaving of them was, over the next fifty years, to change the course of history. In him fate had made a good choice, for in his fingers the threads did not slip or waver as the complex pattern of India's independence was being worked out by the people.

Tilak was arrested for writing articles (in his newspaper *Kesari*) and making speeches which the British authorities regarded as highly inflammatory and seditious. He was tried for sedition in the High Court of Bombay and was sentenced to eighteen months' hard labour. This trial was notable for being the first occasion in the hundred years since British rule was firmly established that an Indian had refused to back down and apologize for an offence which the law held to be as heinous as murder. He boldly declared his innocence and courageously went to prison to serve his sentence. From that moment Tilak's life gained a new and timeless meaning.

At first both the British Government and the Indian people were dazed and bewildered by Tilak's defiant attitude. Messages, inquiries, replies, flashed to and fro between London and Calcutta (then the capital of India), and the Anglo-Indian Press wrote laborious articles, supporting the Government. They were forced to admit, however, that a new philosophy of defiance had sprung up in the political life of the country. The prophet of a new, democratic India had arrived on the scene. In Tilak the people discovered a champion who would fight for their emancipation and freedom. Overnight they acclaimed him as saviour of India—a new star of uncommon brightness in the Indian sky. The legal proceedings were dismissed as being a travesty of justice; the British judge had found Tilak guilty, but the people's voice, as it spoke in the Indian National Congress, declared, "In our heart of hearts we believe Mr. Tilak to be innocent. In his prison-home our sympathy goes forth towards him for whom the Nation is in tears."

To secure Tilak's conviction, Mr. Arthur Strachey, the High Court Judge, had flagrantly twisted the meaning of Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code. Sedition, he said, was disaffection, and "Disaffection means simply the absence of affection". Therefore if Tilak viewed the British rule unfavourably, he was guilty of sedition. The British Press, known for its fearless criticism of the Government of the day, and a jealous guardian of the people's right of free expression, was shocked, as well it might be, by this fantastic judgment. The Liberal *Daily Chronicle* wrote, "We have no sympathy with incitement to crime masquerading as criticism. But in this particular case the prosecution admitted their inability to connect the murders with the articles. This, after all, is the important point. Did these articles amount to an incitement to murder? The prosecution offered

no evidence and in the absence of evidence there must remain a doubt to the justice of so severe a sentence on the accused.

"Wildness, discontent, mischievous rubbish there may be in plenty. But we have got on with it and we shall get on with it again. Prove real sedition—above all, conclusively connect it with crime—and we should all favour sharp, stern punishment. But when it comes to overhauling poems and constructing elaborated innuendoes from eulogies of picturesque and popular bandits, one feels that the Government are on a perilous path."

No doubt Strachey was a worthy enough imperialist, even if he was not a particularly worthy judge. Maybe he was afraid that Tilak had depth-charged the ship Pax Britannica. If he was, then he and those who followed him certainly struggled hard for twenty years to repair the damage and save the ship. In that effort, they prosecuted Tilak again and again for the crime of sedition; the indirect result of these attempts to gag him was to spur the people on to demand wider liberties, and thus to bring British rule nearer to its end.

The battle which began in 1897 was won in 1917. Not till then was the legal battle finally brought to an end and the same High Court of Bombay which had sentenced Tilak ruled that Mr. Justice Strachey had been wrong in defining "disaffection" as "absence of affection". So at last Tilak's contention that he had every right to criticize the Government and demand Swaraj was vindicated.

Not only was Tilak's trial of 1897 a turning point in the history of India's fight for independence and democracy; it is also a landmark in the history of the emergence of Asia from domination and symbolized the determination of the colonial peoples to throw off all foreign rule. Tilak's defiance of British authority made it certain that India would in the end win democratic freedom; it also ensured that in the end all Asian peoples would be freed.

In the West, Sir Winston Churchill, who is rightly hailed as the defender of democracy, saved the world from despotism by his stubborn stand against Hitler. But at heart he was an imperialist; and while he fought for the preservation of democracy at home he was denying it to people in the British possessions abroad. With the words, "I have not become the first minister of the Crown to liquidate the British Empire," he rejected India's legitimate demand for independence. The attitude he showed at the time—and, indeed, always showed on the subject of India—is difficult to reconcile with

the accepted picture of Churchill as a champion of freedom. Coming generations will remember him as a matchless fighter for the cause of democracy; and yet the impartial student of world affairs is bound to note this blemish in his great record.

The Indian prisoner who defied the British Raj will, we feel confident, be hailed by future historians, as a creator of democracy in India, indeed all over Asia. He inspired a fallen people with the urge to attain independence and laid the foundation of democratic freedom in India. He fanned into life a new spirit of revolutionary fervour which had a direct bearing upon events in many parts of the world. Tilak's work not only made the emergence of a democratic India inevitable; it also enabled her to develop a moral power whose immense possibilities for peace are making themselves increasingly felt today.

All this has its roots in that historic trial of Bal Gangadhar Tilak. This book is the story of his struggle. It is the story of the first battles between British Imperialism and Indian Nationalism, stretching over a period of nearly forty years from 1881, when Tilak entered public life, until 1920 when, on his death, the Indian leadership devolved upon Mahatma Gandhi.

No student of contemporary history and of Asia's political revolution can afford to ignore the study of Tilak's life and times. His forty years' fight constitutes a vital stage in a national revolution which with the withdrawal of British power from the Indian subcontinent on August 15th, 1947, was to usher India on to the international stage as an independent and democratic nation. This has meant the dissolution of the unequal Indo-British partnership and the end of a continental order "which had changed the economy, the political structure and the power relationships in Asia and Europe for 450 years, for what came to a close in 1947 was not the British Empire in India, but the epoch that Vasco da Gama had ushered in when he arrived at Calicut 450 years ago (in 1498)."[1]

[1] *Indian Revolution*, by "Chanakya".

I

TILAK'S BACKGROUND

The old falls, time changes, and new life blossoms out of the ruins.

SCHILLER

The year 1856 was an important one in India's history. The old order was ending—the "old order", that is, which began in 1818 with the eclipse of the Mahratta Empire and ended in 1857 with the great Indian revolt known as the Indian Mutiny. It was a period of great changes; some states—Tanjawar, Satara, Indore, Gwalior, Baroda among others—were the scene of revolutions; others disappeared altogether; others again lost their independence; and many more became little more than landed estates. There were important changes in Maharashtra: the people were disarmed, and the martial communities lost their jobs; unemployment grew among the white-collar classes; the business community declined; artisans could find no work; the priestly class almost died out; and the learned lost the Princes' patronage. The pressure on the land grew unbearable. In a word, all classes and masses, rich and poor, prince and peasant, were equally affected by the changing order.

In 1856 began the train of events which led to the national revolt of the following year. In July Lord Canning issued an order that no Indian recruit should be accepted for the Army in future who would not undertake to march wherever he might be ordered. A rumour sprang up that the Queen had chosen Lord Canning as Governor General of India to convert all the Indian soldiers to Christianity; this order was looked on as the first step in a policy of wholesale conversion of Indians. This impression was further strengthened by the recent increased activity of missionaries and a manifesto in which they had predicted that the new railways and steamships were destined to accomplish the spiritual union of England and India under one faith.

A further blow to the Hindu religion was a new law which removed legal obstacles to the remarriage of Hindu widows. The general unrest was increased by the astrologers' predictions that the centenary of Clive's victory at Plassey in 1757, would see the end of the East India Company's rule and would be heralded by floods and an outbreak of cholera. These did, in fact, happen in 1856.

At the same time propaganda against the British was being actively put about by agents of the King of Persia (engaged in a squabble with the British) and the discontented heir of the Peshwas, Nanasaheb. Such was the explosive atmosphere in India when Tilak was born in July 1856.

By an odd coincidence, on that very day, July 23rd, 1856, *The Times* was commenting on the Indian situation.

On the prevailing apathy in general it says: "So languid have been the debates and so slight has been the interest hitherto felt in India that the presence of thirty or forty members must be considered a very great advance...."

On the East India Company's refusal of the Governor General's request for independent accountants to be sent from England to supervise Indian public accounts. . . . "The first thing that strikes us is the incurable confusion, in which Indian accounts are involved. ... The expenditure on public works is stated by Lord Dalhousie as £2,500,000 for 1853-4 and by the Board of Control as considerably under £1,000,000. Of this discrepancy no solution is offered."

Of the neglect of a Law Commission's report on setting up a criminal code for India: "Another subject on which much dissatisfaction was justly felt is the treatment of the Law Commission."

And it concludes: "Mr. Vernon Smith (of the Board of Trade) . . . seems afraid to follow his own impulses and far too ready to give up his own views at the bidding of Indian opinion and its representatives in this country. Now Indian opinion in the proper sense of the word—that is, opinion of the governed classes in India—does not exist at all and the counterfeit which we mistake for it is only the opinion of the servants of the Company—the governing class themselves. Opinion in India is against the reduction of salaries because the classes who pay them have no means of expressing an opinion. Opinion in India is against competition for civil appointments, because it is the opinion of those who hold them by patronage. Opinion in India is against sending out an accountant, because it is

the opinion of many bad accountants who are there already. Opinion in India is against the Law Commission because it is regarded as an infraction of the privilege of the service to do everything for India themselves. All this is quite natural; but it is neither natural nor right that a Minister on whose shoulders this heavy trust is laid should suffer himself to be governed by the opinions of those who are bound to submit to his decisions and who view every measure proposed for the benefit of India through the medium of class prejudices and personal ambition."

The Times article was to prove prophetic. Tilak's life and career, as we shall see, was devoted to creating a real public opinion in India, to ending political and financial muddle, to wiping out class prejudices, and to making India no longer a field for the personal ambitions of British rulers. The abuses *The Times* complained about on the day of Tilak's birth were the very abuses which he attacked all through his life, so paving the way for the independence of the country.

Tilak's life begins on July 23rd, 1856, in a rented house at Ratnagiri in Bombay State, on the West coast of India. This small town of some 3,000 people, mostly peasants, artisans and fishermen, clings to the shore of an unfriendly sea and has little to boast of in the way of natural beauty or commercial advantages. Unlike the magnificent ports of Bombay and Calcutta, Ratnagiri (which means in English "a Mountain of Jewels") is a mean harbour with treacherous swirls and eddies that make landing a risky operation in the monsoon season. How it came to have such a romantic name, no one knows. Today, it is a place of pilgrimage for thousands of Indians who go to pay homage to the memory of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the founder of the Indian Revolution.

For seven or eight generations over a period of three centuries the Tilaks had lived in the village of Chikhalgaon near Ratnagiri and enjoyed Khoti rights which were bestowed by the kings and rulers of those days on men who showed enterprise and initiative in the pioneering work of clearing the forests and founding new settlements. The Khots won back land from the sea, dammed rivers, dug wells and brought new land under cultivation. They built roads and helped the peasants to market their farm produce; they arranged marriages for suitable boys and girls in the villages, and attended namakarans (christening ceremonies) and cremations. It was their business, too, to collect the land taxes in their villages and pay them

over to the Government treasury. The Khot was an important and responsible figure in the life of his village, a patriarch respected and loved by all.

Not for nothing did Bal Tilak have such an ancestry. For he remains, in a sense, the pioneer Khot of the last century, clearing away the wood of British imperialism in India, reclaiming the lost ground of human liberties, rising superior to petty conflicts and trying to weld a host of differing opinions into new ideals of freedom and democracy. Like Benjamin Franklin, one of the founders of the American Revolution, "from small means he established very grand truths".

Bal Tilak was born into the clan or sept called Chitpavan, whose legendary origin recalls the Greek myth of the phoenix. This miraculous bird, when it grew old, burnt itself on a funeral pile and rose from the ashes with fresh youth and strength. In a similar way the Chitpavans are said to have been raised by the god Parashuram from the ashes of seven dead men. According to legend the ageing Parashuram, wanting to carry out some religious rites, could find no Brahmans to help in their performance. But as he wandered along the seashore, seven bodies were washed up in front of him, which he collected together and cremated, and then out of the glowing ashes brought the seven men back to life. These were the original Chitpavans (chita=ashes; pavan=pure) who did Parashuram a service by carrying out the religious rites for him. Legend says that the descendants of these men who were cremated and restored to life are the present-day Chitpavan Brahmans.

The legend also tells how Parashuram utterly destroyed the despotic and oppressive Kshatryas (warrior lords) and brought back the people from the woods and jungles where they had taken refuge from the oppressors. Thus he restored peace and prosperity to the country. Many historians consider Parashuram to have been the founder of the first Aryan settlement in the Konkan on the West coast of the modern Bombay State, and to this day he is honoured as a family deity by many Brahman families in this part of India.

As with the tribe of Judah, so with the Chitpavans, persecution seems to be their badge. Like the Jews, too, in spite of their small numbers they have survived all kinds of vicissitudes. The Peshwas, who spread the empire of the Mahrattas all over India, were also Chitpavan Brahmans, who left their ancestral home in Konkan in

the latter half of the seventeenth century because of religious persecution by the Moslem ruler of those days, and sought service under Shahu Maharaj of Satara, the grandson of Shivaji the Great. They were followed by many other Brahmans who found a new calling in the Mahratta army which, in the course of time, came to be commanded by them. Among them was Bajirao Bhat, who defeated the turbulent Nizam of Hyderabad and conquered large areas of territory from the Moghul Emperor, thus helping to spread the Mahratta power over almost the whole of India. Many scholars assert (and with good reason) that the Peshwas would still have ruled over India today, if the British had not appeared on the scene to oust them.

A hundred years ago, there lived at Ratnagiri a schoolteacher, Gangadhar Ramachandra Tilak, and his wife, Parwatibai. They had three daughters, but no son. The wife, a very religious woman, undertook severe penances to propitiate the Sun God, so that she might be blessed with a son. To the great joy of the family her prayers were answered and a boy was born to her on July 23rd, 1856. Gangadhar, the anxious father, waited in the next room with a watch in his hand to note down the exact time of his son's birth, so that the family astrologer could cast the baby's horoscope. It was one hour after sunrise, the time when devout Hindus go to worship in the village temple and ring the bells. Gangadhar and Parwati in their simple faith thought it a favourable omen that their son's birth should be heralded by the temple bells and marked by the prayers of their fellow villagers. They named the boy Keshav after his great-grandfather, but he soon came to be known to everybody by his nickname, Bal.

On the sixth night after the baby's arrival they carried out the Shasti-pujan ceremony to welcome the good fairy Satwai, who, so the popular Hindu belief runs, visits every new-born child and marks its future on its forehead. Bal's mother, like many another mother before and since, was convinced that her son was the direct answer to her prayers and was therefore destined to become a great and famous man, as "lustrous and powerful as the sun".

It is worth mentioning that the two men Tilak and Gandhi, who were mainly responsible for bringing British rule in India to an end, were both born by the sea. Unlike other conquerors of India from the day of Alexander the Great to the days of the Moghuls, who all attacked the country from the North, through the Khyber Pass,

Britain alone conquered India by sea; and it was through men who had the sea in their blood that their rule came to an end.

Records of the Tilak family are few; but there is enough material to get some idea of the influence of his forebears and his surroundings on the boy who, later on, was to be the *bête noir* of British power in India. There is no doubt that the Tilaks were a little out of the ordinary, perhaps slightly eccentric and certainly independent in outlook. Keshavrao, the great-grandfather of Bal, was "an expert horseman, an accurate marksman, a champion swimmer and a good cook". He was a high-ranking civil servant under the Peshwas (who spread the Mahratta Empire over India) but resigned his office in 1818 as soon as the British took over the administration of the country, for he refused "to serve a foreign government". His son, Ramchandrapant, was a talented man but whimsical and rather irresponsible. When his wife died of cholera in Poona, he started off on a long journey to the holy city of Benares, leaving his large family behind for Gangadhar, his son, to look after. He returned home as unexpectedly as he had left, but went away again and died in Benares as a "Sanyasi" (one who had renounced the worldly life).

Ramchandrapant played a vital part in the formation of his grandchild's character. During his short stay at home he taught Bal to read and write, and soon discovered how exceptionally quick he was to learn. For hours the boy would sit patiently with his grandfather under the shade of the mango trees, looking out to sea and listening eagerly to the tales of adventure which the old man told him. He had witnessed some of the most horrible, as well as some of the most inspiring deeds that took place during the Indian Mutiny. If we judge by the future career of the boy, it would be fair to guess that the old man was largely responsible for stirring the young Bal's imagination and so laying the foundation of his stormy career.

When Bal was born, his father's salary was Rs.25 (about £1 17*s.* 6*d.*) a month; on this income he maintained a large family for many years. He could not rise in the service rapidly, mainly because he was quite incapable of flattering his European superior officers, which in those days was the accepted means of bettering one's chances in life. However, he used his great knowledge of Sanskrit, mathematics and grammar to write textbooks for students and so eke out his small salary.

Fortunately for Gangadharpant living was cheap in those days

and he was able to keep up a fairly respectable standard and even to save a rupee or two which he put in the Post Office savings bank. The record he kept of his day-to-day accounts shows how year after year he managed to save a few hundred rupees. Some of his savings he invested in a concern called Ratnagiri Saw Mills Company which was started by an Englishman, Mr. Crawford, who was a district collector at Ratnagiri in 1863. Because of the influence he wielded and the high rate of dividend he promised, a great number of people bought his shares. But Crawford was not above misusing the shareholders' money and the saw mill company soon went into liquidation. With it went about £150 of Gangadharpant's savings.

In spite of the loss Gangadharpant, when he died, left about Rs.5,000 (£375) to his son together with the copyright income of his books. It was not a great deal of money but it gave the boy a sense of independence and security, for in those days Rs.5,000 if not a fortune, was at any rate a fair nest-egg.

We know little about Bal's mother, except that she was a devout and religious woman. She was never strong and, perhaps owing to her habit of frequent fasting, and the other penances which she practised, her health gave way and she died in 1866, soon after her husband was transferred from Ratnagiri to Poona. Bal, who was then barely ten years old, has left behind a Sanskrit poem in which he mourns his mother's loss.

In 1872, before Bal was sixteen, Gangadharpant died, leaving the boy an orphan. From then on he was looked after by his uncle Govind. Govind and his wife were attached to their talented nephew and, being themselves uneducated, allowed him almost a free hand in whatever he did. All the same, Bal used to consult his uncle on all personal matters and had a very high opinion of him.

Before he died, Gangadharpant had performed Bal's marriage ceremony, when the boy was fifteen. The bride was named Tapibai and she belonged to the respectable old family of Ballal Bal, well-known for their hospitality and religious charity. There is a story of Tapibai's family which is typical of their attitude to life. In those days—it was the transitional period when the British Raj was still trying to establish its authority in remote regions like Konkan (which was notorious for its lack of communications)—cases of theft and larceny were common. To prevent the thieves from finding the

household valuables the people used to hide them at night in heaps of corn and take them out again by day. One day when a beggar came to the door, Tapibai's mother took a handful of rice, along with a gold ring which was hidden in it, to put into the beggar's bowl. Just in time she realized her mistake and hesitated for a moment. Should she be uncharitable—and save the ring, or give the beggar the handful of rice and lose the ring? Her husband understood his wife's dilemma instinctively and without hesitation bade her give the beggar the alms and with it the ring. "It was the beggar's share, and God, in His infinite mercy, wanted you to give it to him," he said.

2

CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION

> The childhood shows the man,
> As morning shows the day. Be famous then
> By wisdom; as thy empire must extend,
> So let extend thy mind o'er all the world.
>
> JOHN MILTON

Bal was not an easy child to manage at school. His teachers were always complaining to his father about his unorthodox and high-spirited behaviour. One day some of the boys made a mess on the classroom floor by dropping groundnut shells while the teacher was out of the room. When he returned, he was understandably angry and wanted to know who had done it. No one would own up, so the teacher threatened to cane the whole class. When Bal's turn came to hold out his hand, he refused. He said, "I did not make the mess and therefore you cannot punish me." The teacher asked him for the name of the boy who had done it, but he refused to tell.

Another of Bal's habits which sometimes infuriated his teachers was his indifference to accepted classroom routine. When a sum in arithmetic was set, the teacher, quite rightly, expected the answer to be neatly written down. But Bal used to shout out the answer as soon as the problem was set. If the teacher asked him where the "method" was, the boy would point to his head. The teacher thought him cheeky; but the fact was that Bal was a precocious child and was developing his natural aptitude for mathematics too fast for the slow-witted village teacher. Partly this was the result of Gangadharpant's coaching at home. He was himself quite a reputable scholar and mathematician, and wrote a textbook on trigonometry which earned a good deal of praise in Poona and Bombay.

Bal's wilfulness continued all through his scholastic career. He was a "voracious reader" according to the account of one of his contemporaries in college; but he could never concentrate on the prescribed textbooks. When he entered the rough and tumble of politics the leading positions came to him without the asking; but as he was not a successful student he never managed to reach the highest place either in class or in examination. This was partly due to Tilak's assumption that his teachers and examiners ought to recognize his ability so long as he proved it by solving the most difficult problems. In writing the answers to questions set for examination, he would deliberately leave out the easier ones and answer only those which were really difficult. Of course the learned examiners could not accept his novel approach to examinations and so he used to miss distinction. But in the final B.A. examination his friends prevailed upon him to write the answers in the "routine manner". As a result he took a first class in mathematics.

Tilak passed his matriculation examination in 1872 and entered the Deccan College at Poona as a resident student. There he decided to sacrifice his first year in college to cultivating a good physique. As a child he had never been robust, and he was further handicapped by an early marriage. Tapibai, his wife, was bigger and stronger than he was, and Tilak's friends used to tease him about it. It made him look small when boys had a laugh at the expense of his physique, for he had a large head, bony wrists and a pot-belly. He used to argue that a man's health was not necessarily limited by his physical disadvantages. By the use of his reason and his will he can get the better of them, and sometimes the attempt to overcome them will develop a stronger personality than if he had had no physical disadvantages. He took up his friends' challenge and to prove the truth of his "theory" he joined a gymnasium, where he took a course in body-building exercises. His favourite games were Indian wrestling, rowing and swimming. He drank plenty of milk, ate butter, yoghourt, fresh vegetables, wholemeal bread and fruits. A strict vegetarian and teetotaller, Tilak did not even take up smoking, a favourite habit with students of his generation. The only "vices" he contracted at this time were drinking tea and chewing betelnut. Morning and evening, every day for twelve months he went through a course of Indian gymnastics and exercises, deliber-

ately neglecting his studies. As a result he failed in the First Year examination, but to the amazement of jeering friends he did what he had set out to do—he became a strong and robust man. In later life he used to say that he never regretted sacrificing his first twelve months at college to building a sturdy constitution, for it helped him to withstand the physical and mental hardships of many years in jail.

Tilak attached great importance to physical exercise for young boys. In later years, when he became the guardian of two young boys, Prabhakar Bapat and Jagannath Maharaj, the first question he used to ask them whenever they went to see him was whether they were taking suitable exercise to develop their bodies. His letters to them written in 1919 from England ask the same question and are always stressing the importance of exercise.

Tilak was a carefree young man and soon gathered round him a circle of happy friends. But he was, like Mazzini, "a troublesome student", always ready to rebel against the formalities which made up a big part of college life. He was one of those who want to know the reason why, rather than merely conform to the discipline of the classroom.

When Tilak joined the Deccan College the Colonel-Professors of the East India Company's time were being slowly replaced by men of learning and science. Young graduates from Oxford and Cambridge, steeped in the free atmosphere of English universities, had begun to come to India. Some of them were earnest educationalists, who sincerely believed in their vocation and loved India and the Indians. Professor Wordsworth and Professor Shoot can be mentioned as two who helped Bal Tilak to appreciate English ideas and literature. Professor Wordsworth, the grandson of the poet, lectured on Milton, Shelley and Byron, the trio of freethinkers in English poetry; and Professor Shoot on Gibbon, Burke and Hume, as well as political economy.

Among the Indian professors who made a lasting impression on Tilak was Kerunana Chhatre, who taught mathematics. He was very popular among the students and allowed them to see him at any time of the day. Poor students used to get free meals at his home and he even paid the college fees of some of them. He must have been a man of extraordinary ability, for he had never been to a university but had taught himself higher mathematics and astronomy. Professor

Chhatre's fine character and solid scholarship earned recognition even from the alien government, for it appointed him acting Principal of the Deccan College when the British Principal, Professor Selby, went home on leave. Everyone was surprised at his promotion, for the acting head of the College could hardly boast of his knowledge of the English language, and in those days, not to know English, however proficient one was in other branches of knowledge, was almost to be classed among the semi-illiterate.

His contemporaries tell many stories of Tilak's college days. In one thing they all agree: Tilak was never satisfied with reading the textbooks. He showed a marked aptitude for mathematics and often surprised his professors by solving difficult problems set in the *Cambridge Mathematical Journal*. All the same, he was far from being a model student. His reading, for instance, was wide but very desultory. In his four years at the Deccan College he read most of the Sanskrit classics including the great socio-religious treatise, the Manusmriti. He devoted much of his time to writers on politics and metaphysics, particularly Hegel, Kant, Spencer, Mill, Bentham, Voltaire and Rousseau. At the same time he did not neglect Marathi saints and poets like Ramdas, Tukaram and Moropant. Tilak got through this vast reading without sacrificing his favourite habit of having long discussions at night with his friends. Mr. N. C. Kelkar in his Marathi biography records, "The evenings saw him at play and the shades of the night gave the signal for the approach of free discussions and unending gossip, sometimes very spicy, with companions in the College."

Among his college friends Tilak had earned a reputation for frankness of speech which bordered on bluntness. Some of them nicknamed him "Mr. Blunt" after the character in Sir Walter Scott's novel *Kenilworth*. Bal Tilak used to have heated discussions with his fellow students on all kinds of subjects and baffle his adversaries by putting forward original arguments on the most commonplace subjects. Mr. Dajisaheb Khare, who became a leading lawyer in the High Court of Bombay and was a life-long friend of Tilak from their first meeting in the college, once said of Tilak that he "had the gift of reaching the core of a problem in a flash. He could explain any problem with all its pros and cons in his direct and logical style, and support his arguments by irrefutable ancient authorities."

Nothing delighted Bal more than to engage his friends in robust ragging. Any student who showed signs of not being manly enough was a sure victim for his ridicule. One of his college friends started spreading roses on his bed to make it cool and fragrant in the summer. Bal climbed through the window, upset the flower-bed and left a note on the dressing-table, "You are warned, don't do it again. Are you a man or a woman?"

Mr. Appasaheb Sharangpani, one of Tilak's intimate friends, has this to say about his friend's college days: "When Bal first joined the Deccan College in 1873 he looked a miserable and insignificant boy who suffered from watery eyes and patches of scabies on his head. Within two years, however, by his own efforts he had changed into a strong and healthy man.

"Never a methodical student, however, Bal excelled in Sanskrit and mathematics. Analytical geometry was a particular favourite of his. My special subject for B.A. was "Samuel Butler's Sermons" which Bal did not approve of. He was always advising me to study mathematics. He never relied on ready-made notes and preferred to read his books and references in the original. Whatever subject he was studying Bal used to try to analyse and understand its basic principles first and apply his own interpretation in its exposition, and usually he had something new and original to contribute. His uncle asked me to persuade Bal to try for a government job or practise law. But I never dared to mention this to him as I knew for certain that he had made up his mind not to do either."

Soon after taking his B.A., Tilak decided to study law and in due course passed the LL.B. examination. His leaning was towards scholarship and research, and yet he had chosen law, a fact which surprised some of his friends. They asked him why he chose law rather than the Master of Arts degree which was considered by many young men of his day to be a sign of learning and culture. Tilak replied, "As I propose to devote my life to the task of rousing my people, I think a knowledge of law will be more useful than a university degree in literature or science. I do not envisage a life without my coming into conflict with the British authorities." He could hardly have spoken more truly. Here the political leader of the morrow was making the testament of his life.

Among the many friends he made in the College, Gopalrao Agarkar will be the first to be remembered. We have mentioned

Khare and Sharangpani, who both gained distinction and honour in later life. They kept up close relations with Tilak till the end of his life and each in his own way helped in his cause. Tilak's friendship with Agarkar was not perhaps so intimate as with the other two; but in his views on politics and service to the community he was nearer to Agarkar than to anyone else. These two young men were serious students of sociology and history, and together they read and compared notes on books by European authors on politics, economics and social development. The one theme on which they agreed was the need for ending the foreign domination of India as soon as possible. Tilak held that they must concentrate on creating political consciousness in the people, while Agarkar put more stress on social reform, which he considered would lead to political consciousness and ultimately to the liberation of the country. In spite of this difference in approach and outlook, they agreed on the supreme question of the Indian people's emancipation and freedom. And since their common ideal was the independence of India, they sincerely believed they could work together, little realizing what clashes and conflicts were to flare up between them in the future. And least of all did they foresee differences to arise in the field of education.

Tilak and Agarkar, when they left the Deccan College, had already come to two definite decisions: (1) not to join the Government service and (2) to dedicate their lives to the service of the people. An interesting discussion which took place between Tilak and his two companions, Upasani and Agarkar, throws interesting light on the workings of his mind at this time and shows what ideas and impulses were influencing him towards his future course of action. It also reveals the man in the formative stage of a career that was to be decisive for India.

A Dialogue

TILAK: Tonight let's talk about the line of action we propose to follow when we leave college. It's nearly three years since we first started thinking and talking about it.

UPASANI: Why worry, Tilak, at this stage? Passing our examinations should be enough preparation for the future.

AGARKAR: Frankly, Upasani, I don't regard passing examina-

tions as anything more than a stepping stone which will give us a lift in society and give us the chance to play a more honourable and effective part in the service of the country. Of course, I have given some time and thought to considering the work before us. But I must say my ideas are still forming themselves, though I think, on the whole, that social reform should have priority over political reform.

UPASANI: Obviously, you haven't changed much since we discussed this matter in Bombay last year.

TILAK: That does not matter. Let us see if we can arrive at some common platform in spite of the apparent differences in our points of view. I suggest we confine our discussion to finding our common ideals. Well, then, Agarkar, I take it you stick to your view that social reform must come before political reform?

AGARKAR: Yes, that's how I feel. I have thought about it deeply and long, and have come to this conclusion. Tilak, leave aside our individual cases, but what do we see around us? Most of our Hindu community is soaked through and through in ignorance, superstitition and dreadful social practices. I shudder to see people performing ridiculous ceremonies like offering coconuts and new-laid eggs before a railway engine to get a safe journey; those awful funeral processions and worst of all—but how can I express the horror and agony I feel at the disfiguring of the widows? I simply cannot bear to think of the horrid custom. Tilak, say what you like but my war-cry will be social reform first and last, and all the time.

TILAK: Look here, don't imagine that I am opposed to social reform. Who does not love his home? Like your favourite poet Shelley, our Saint Ramadas says, "Do your duty to the family first." Agarkar, you can shout your social reform from the house-top, but what will you say to a peasant if he comes to you and says, "You ask me to put my house in order. All right, but where is the house?" Then you will have to give him a house first! You see all our activities must lead to providing homes for the homeless. What I say is, give the people the homes and then ask them to put them in order. Will you agree with me that the English came here for the benefit of their homes in England and not so much to emancipate us?

AGARKAR: Of course, I agree with you. I am not a fool to shut my eyes to hard facts. But I must say I feel differently from you. I

think man's ideal should be set very high, even if it meant he had to take hundreds of years to achieve one tenth of it. You attach too much importance to this material life; it has influenced your way of thinking and obscured your vision. I do not think the heavenly family happiness and eternal bliss described in our Sanskrit epics are beyond the reach of man. I do grant you, though, that we cannot ignore the political realities as they are in India today. What I insist on is that politics must not become an obsession with us. After all, our political condition is an outward symptom of our social existence. All the same, call it political or social, I will not quarrel with you over words. I use these terms in their accepted meaning. I hope, Tilak, you don't misunderstand me.

TILAK: Of course not. I think it's a lucky day today. We have been discussing things quietly and without heat—and surely that in itself is an achievement! Agarkar, I am convinced each of us will serve the country in his own way and our service will be of the highest order. My friend, I am in complete agreement with your original proposition that all our activities must tend to the betterment of our homes, in other words the reform of our society. Although I do not look upon the home with your poet's vision, I think of it as the firm foundation of our well-being. But let us not forget that whatever ideals we preach, they should be attainable by the common people. We have to think in terms of the man in the street and examine the circumstances which condition his life and action. We must look back to the year 1632 and forward to 1930. Political circumstances, as you say, are only a part of the whole, but they come into everything. Well, whether you give the first place in the home to the family deity or to the children, the fact remains that under foreign rule our children do not get fresh milk and proper nourishment. Can anyone deny that our cattle are exported to foreign countries and our land taxes are increased every thirty years, making the farmer poorer and poorer? You know what kind of education is given to the children. I call it rubbish. There are a hundred and one terrible superstitions and dirty habits in our country, masquerading as religion. But has the Government done anything about it? It must be our job to teach our men and women our own religion and its true meaning. What we expect from the Government is financial help, but we should not allow them power

to interfere in our religious practices; they can never understand their real meaning. Think of their belief that "a cow has no soul". Disgusting! Agarkar, if you are bent on social reform, well, follow your choice by all means. I say, begin at once. Talk will get you nowhere. Once you start on the campaign of social reform you will soon find out for yourself that at every step you come into conflict with the Government.

AGARKAR: Yes, if I have to fight I will fight. But do you realize, Tilak, that you will have to fight against ignorance just as much as against the Government?[1]

[1] *Life of Lokamanya Tilak*, by N. C. Kelkar.

3

FIRST YEARS OF PUBLIC LIFE

The Youth of a Nation are the trustees of Posterity.
BENJAMIN DISRAELI: *Sybil*, Chapter 13

The University of Bombay was established in 1856, the year Tilak was born. As it was the beginning of university education in India the faculties were mainly confined to subjects like literature, history, moral philosophy, mathematics and medicine; science and engineering were taught but only at an elementary level. The first university calendar was published in 1861. In 1862 only one student, Madhavrao Kunte, passed his B.A., and the total number of graduates from 1861 to 1875 was 179. In the following year, 1876, eighteen students appeared for the B.A. examination and only seven passed, Tilak being one of them. He passed his LL.B. in 1880 when the total number of successful students was only twenty. These figures clearly show the limited extent of education in India at that time, and also explain why it was every graduate's dream and hope to secure a lucrative government post. It is no wonder, then, that most Brahman families looked on a government job as the natural culmination to a University education. But men like Tilak and Agarkar were different. They deliberately decided to reject the material prospects offered by an administrative post and chose a way of life which was likely to mean life-long poverty.

"It was in July or August 1879," Tilak writes, "when I was living at the Deccan College, studying for the LL.B. examination that Mr. Agarkar and myself first discussed the importance and practicability of establishing private schools on the model of the missionary institutions. There was no difference of opinion as to the need for native enterprise in education, but the question was how to make it successful. Self-sacrifice was evidently the only means for men situated like

us. . . . After many prolonged discussions the conclusion at which we arrived was that, if we applied ourselves to the task with the determination of carrying out our idea *at any sacrifice*, it was not an impossibility."

Again in 1919, referring to his comradeship with Agarkar, Tilak said, "We were men whose plans were at fever heat, whose thoughts were of the degraded condition of our country, and after long thought we came to the conclusion that the salvation of our motherland lay in the education, and only in the education, of the people."

These were the lines along which Tilak was thinking, when he came into contact with a man of like mind with himself. This was Vishnushastri Chiplonkar, who had already made a name as a Marathi writer with an incisive and trenchant style. He joined the government service as a teacher in 1873 and soon after started the *Nibhandha Mala*, a monthly journal, which opened a new world to the Marathi reading public. Chiplonkar was possibly the first modern prose writer in this language to use it with real force and effectiveness. Just as Voltaire made every despot from Stockholm to Rome and from St. Petersburg to Lisbon tremble in his shoes when he took up his pen, so Chiplonkar made the sycophants and placehunters squirm under the lash of his words. Satire was, however, secondary to his patriotism; he ridiculed servility in order to foster the spirit of independence.

Chiplonkar was so convinced of his mission to mould the youth of the country that he decided to give up his government service and start a school of his own where he would be able to put his ideas on education into practice. Tilak and Agarkar offered to join him. Writing to his brother, Laxman Rao, on September 13th, 1879, Chiplonkar says, "The memorable 1st October is approaching. I shall enjoy the pleasure of kicking off my chains on that day. Mr. Agarkar (sitting for M.A.), Mr. Tilak (sitting for LL.B.), Mr. Bhagwat and Mr. Karandikar (taking his B.A.) have put forward proposals for joining me in the enterprise. This they have done of their own accord. We have settled on 1st January for the hoisting of the standard." That was the day on which the New English School was to open and proclaim a new principle—that Indian education should be carried out by Indians and for Indians.

The New English School was opened punctually on Thursday, January 1st, 1880 by Vishnushastri Chiplonkar in partnership with

Tilak, Agarkar and Namjoshi. "No school through the length and breadth of India perhaps can boast of a group of founders of such great personality. The rejuvenation of the land of their birth was their goal and they looked upon education, properly conceived and properly conducted, as the surest way leading to it."[1]

The reputation and prestige of the founders were so great that parents sent their children from distant towns to join the school. Students of great promise, enjoying government scholarships, left their old schools to join the New English School, which became an instantaneous success. The number of boys on January 1st, 1881, 1882, 1883, 1884, 1885, stood respectively at 336, 501, 593, 732 and 1,009. Matriculation results, the outward sign and popular test of the efficiency of instruction in the school, were consistently satisfactory, even brilliant, both in quality and quantity. In the examination of 1884 eighty-nine per cent of the students sent up (thirty-four out of thirty-eight) were successful, a percentage higher than that of any other school, either government or private, in the Presidency of Bombay. The most coveted Sanskrit scholarship—the Jagannath Shankarshet—became almost the monopoly of the New English School as it was won by its students for seven consecutive years from 1880–1886.

In September 1882, Sir William Hunter, President of the Education Commission, visited the school and paid a generous tribute. He writes, "Throughout the whole of India I have not yet witnessed a single institution of this nature which can be compared with this establishment. This institution, though not receiving any aid from the Government, can rival and compete with success, not only with the Government High Schools in this country, but may compare favourably with the schools of other countries also."

The cardinal aim of the founders was to make education as inexpensive as possible because the mass of the people were so poor. But they took care to see that cheapness was not achieved at the expense of efficiency.

Although men like Chiplonkar and Tilak were deeply religious they made no provision for moral and religious instruction. Sectarian and denominational appeal had no place in the minds of the founders, who worked on a perfectly secular basis. Breathing and living patriotism, they hoped to mould the characters of their pupils

[1] *The History of the Deccan Education Society*, by Prof. P. M. Limaye.

by their own examples. They had not merely opened a school for teaching students; they had started a new school of thought, a new way of life.

To the organizers the school was only one of many projects for educating the people. They were not content with teaching the young alone; they were convinced that adults and even old people stood in even greater need. Before they could move forward the masses had to be roused to realize their poverty and their degraded condition. The loss of political freedom in any country must necessarily mean the frustration of the hopes and aspirations of the more advanced section of the community. If no way is found to overcome this feeling of frustration, the people either take to violence or slowly lapse into apathy.

Maharashtra showed signs of both these tendencies developing when Tilak came on the scene. The standard of revolt had been raised in Poona in 1878–79 by Wasudeo Balwant Phadke, a government servant. He was an excellent athlete and marksman and had established a secret school for young men to teach them the art of shooting. He had befriended the Mang and Ramoshi (two criminal castes) and had organized the systematic looting of government treasuries and post offices, aiming to collect large funds to raise battalions of young Mahrattas for a guerrilla war against the British. But the criminals among his followers, interested only in loot, got out of control. The revolt soon fizzled out in brigandage, and Phadke was arrested and deported to Aden.

This premature attempt to revolt against the British rule was at once a symptom of the Indian people's desperation and also a sure sign of the spirit of freedom which had begun to stir the hearts of men like Tilak, Agarkar and Chiplonkar.

Phadke's biographer has written that at one point the young Tilak's imagination was fired by the idea of an armed revolution to throw off the British rule, and he went to Wasudeo Balwant for lessons in marksmanship. But he soon realized the futility of following such a course without first enlisting the people's support. Tilak was too profound a student of history not to appreciate that abortive revolutions did more harm than good to a cause, for such a setback creates despondency and inertia which are not easy to dispel.

A revolution is the physical expression of the inner drive towards

radical change. In 1880 this drive towards change was becoming evident in the academic discussions of the educated, but its faint echoes reached no further than the drawing-rooms of the intelligentsia of India—and they were few. Outside these narrow limits there was no contact with—and therefore no hope of response from—the Indian people as a whole. Tilak therefore believed that a renaissance movement was absolutely necessary before a revolution could be thought of.

It was in order to lay the corner-stone of a future revolution that Tilak and his co-workers decided to launch two newspapers, the *Kesari*, written in Marathi, and the *Mahratta* in English. The prospectus, published in October 1880, over the names of Chiplonkar, Tilak, Apte, Gadre, Agarkar and Namjoshi gave the first Tuesday in the new year as the publication date and boldly declared that *Kesari* would deal comprehensively with political and economic conditions in the country, carry objective literary reviews of new works in Marathi, and "would particularly emphasize and spotlight the course of world events and politics". The signatories avowed their determination to treat all topics impartially and objectively, and to keep unswervingly on the path of truth as they saw it. The announcement added, "The evils of flunkeyism and flattery have been growing since the beginning of the Imperial rule and surely every honest man will admit that it is harmful to the true interests of our country."

The leading article of the first issue of *Kesari* (January 4th, 1881), said more on this theme. Surveying the duties and responsibilities of newspapers, which were compared to night-watchmen, keeping the executive officers in wholesome fear of public opinion, it mentioned with approval the influence of newspapers in Britain: "In that country, through the powerful medium of the Press, a vigilant eye is kept on the public conduct of every functionary from the highest to the lowest—from the Prime Minister to the pettiest civil servant—which has enabled the British to enjoy a reasonable guarantee that no case of injustice should long remain concealed and unexposed." The editor further declared his intention of trying to improve social conditions by frankly telling the people what was evil and harmful in their way of life.

Haribhau Amadekar, a teacher in the New English School and a lifelong friend of Tilak, has left a memoir in which he gives an

account of an evening meeting in which the plans for the publication of the papers took shape.

It was late at night, after the dinner-party was over, that something brought up the topic of the people's apathy on public issues. Namjoshi, who was conducting the *Deccan Star*, a weekly English newspaper and who had now joined the New English School, blamed the editors of the journals then published in Poona. He thought the *Dnyanaprakash*, *Kiran*, *Shivaji* and *Dynanachaskshu* were not doing their duty in educating the people and giving them a lead in matters of social and political affairs. This led to a discussion on the vital role an editor can play in the life of modern society. And before midnight plans for publishing two weekly newspapers, one in Marathi and one in English, had been hammered out. When it came to titles for them, the company looked to Chiplonkar, as the senior member of the group and an experienced journalist, for suggestions. He proposed the name *Mahratta* for the English journal and *Vikram* (Prowess) for the Marathi journal. The first was soon accepted but *Vikram* failed to impress the company. Then Tilak came forward with the name *Kesari* ("The Lion") and also an appropriate Sanskrit quotation to proclaim the ideals of the newspaper. This title was unanimously agreed to.

Kesari was to cater for the needs of "the mass of ignorant population, who have generally no idea of what passes around them and who therefore must be given the knowledge of such topics as concern their everyday life by writings on literary, social, political, moral and economic subjects". The *Mahratta* on the other hand, kept in view "the more advanced portion of the community, who require to be provided with material for thinking intelligently on the important topics of the day". The tone and temper of *Kesari* were democratic; its aim was popular education and public agitation. The *Mahratta* was to serve as the authoritative organ of educated public opinion in Maharashtra. It discussed comprehensively every question of high politics, and offered its readers a selection of the views of foreign and Indian journals and publicists on the questions of the day.

The success of the two papers was immediate. By the end of 1882 *Kesari* had the largest circulation of any vernacular paper in the country, and the *Mahratta* was well on the way to becoming the leading organ of native political thought in Western India. The

two newspapers owed their success to virile, impassioned writing, animated at all times by lofty patriotism and the courage of conviction. "The political domination of the Englishman, and the social domination of the Brahman; the spoliation of the country by foreign capitalists and the exploitation of the farmer by moneylenders; the woes of the Hindu widow and the sufferings of the untouchables; the superiority complex of the White race and the divine-right mentality of the priests; the false stratification of the caste-system and the indefensible privileges of white colour; the blind glorification of the old and the mad apotheosis of the new; all these were anathema to these Rolands, always ready to strike at any abuse however old-established and any injustice however strongly entrenched. It was because they took to championing their cause with more enthusiasm than caution, that Agarkar and Tilak had to pass through their first ordeal by fire in public life."[1]

From the start *Kesari* and the *Mahratta* took a lively interest in the affairs of the Indian States, and the preservation of their rights and dignities. The States were regarded as survivals from an age of native independence, and their rulers as the guardians of tradition. And so the minds of patriotic Indians turned to the States and their rulers with feelings of affection and pride. There was a great deal about Baroda and Kolhapur in the *Kesari* and the *Mahratta* during 1881. Both states were administered by Diwans nominated by the British Government during the minority of their rightful rulers. Sir T. Madhavrao, the Diwan of Baroda, came in for criticism at the hands of *Kesari* for his weak-kneed surrender of State interests to the British Government, while Rao Bahadur Mahadeo Vasudeo Barve, the Prime Minister of Kolhapur, was slated for aiding and abetting, or at any rate conniving at, restrictions on the freedom of the young Maharaja of Kolhapur, who had been adopted in 1871 by the widow of Rajaram Maharaja who had died in Florence in 1870. The *Kesari* and the *Mahratta* were not alone in believing that Shivaji Maharaja's adoptive mother was intriguing to get him out of the way on the grounds of his insanity. She obviously wanted to adopt another boy more to her liking.

In a leading article in the *Mahratta* on November 27th, 1881, the young Maharaja is spoken of as an Indian Hamlet, and Barve, the Prime Minister, as persecuting Claudius, while the Maharaja's

[1] *The History of the Deccan Education Society*, by Prof. P. M. Limaye.

guards—Green and Cox by name—were alleged to be conspiring to prove him mad. On January 8th, 1882, certain letters purporting to have been written by the Prime Minister, already printed in a Poona paper, were now printed in the *Mahratta* and a scathing attack was launched against him. The letters seemed to confirm the worst suspicions about Barve; they threw a damning light on the plight of the Maharaja, plainly hinting that even the life of the Prince was not safe. Popular feeling boiled up in indignation. After this, it was plain that Barve had to clear himself in a court of law or he would stand self-condemned.

The story of the legal proceedings by Barve against the editors of *Kesari* and the *Mahratta* in January 1882, for "wicked and malicious defamation", can be told in a few sentences. The letters turned out to be clever forgeries, and at once the bottom was knocked out of the accusations against Barve. Agarkar and Tilak made him an unqualified apology, which, however, was not enough for him. He went on with the case and on July 17th the two editors were sentenced to four months' simple imprisonment. The judge acquitted them of the charge of malice, but held them guilty of reckless defamation in publishing the charges against Barve.

Public opinion in Maharashtra had no doubt about the merits of the case whatever the judgment of the court. The moral responsibility for the sad plight of his master lay on Barve. The young editors themselves won general admiration for their courage, transparent honesty, and utter disinterestedness of purpose. They had taken up the cudgels on behalf of a Mahratta Raja against a man of their own caste and had boldly voiced, without regard to consequences, what the Kolhapur public privately thought and felt but did not dare to say.

As soon as a lawsuit was threatened, public opinion rallied to the editors, and a defence fund was opened. Among its earliest contributors were students of the Deccan College and the New English School, who collectively raised Rs.200 each (£14 10*s.* 0*d.*). Public sympathy was widespread and unmistakable. It was generally felt that, if Agarkar and Tilak suffered, they did so in a worthy cause; it was felt, too, that they had fallen into a legal trap through the very generosity of their natures.

Their release from prison was marked by scenes of great enthusiasm. Two thousand people crowded near the gates of Dongri prison,

in Bombay, to meet them. Receptions and parties were held everywhere. Meanwhile, their work was waiting for them at the New English School. When the two heroes returned to their posts at the school on October 28th, they were overjoyed to find that during their absence it had steadily gone on making progress.

4

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets.

NAPOLEON

1. RESIGNATION

The establishment of newspapers went only part of the way towards fulfilling Tilak's plan for educating the people. But what of those who were illiterate (or semi-literate)? His message of national liberation could only reach the masses if they were able to read and write. And for this he needed well-educated selfless workers who would, as they taught, spread the gospel of nationalism throughout the country. With this aim in view he began to think about developing the New English School into an Arts College, whose graduates would, he hoped, supply the teachers needed for his plan of mass education.

In its three or four years' existence the New English School had inspired the people with confidence that Tilak and his fellow workers could be trusted with any responsibility they chose to shoulder in their efforts to forward the cause of popular education. They had succeeded in gaining the trust of the people of Maharashtra, and this knowledge proved a powerful incentive to seek further opportunities to serve the people. The financial support which the public gave and the high praise which the work of the New English School received from all sides gave these young men confidence that they were working on the right lines.

To give their work a stable foundation and continuity they decided to form themselves into a public institution to be called the Deccan Education Society. This idea had been in the minds of Tilak and his co-workers for some time and its first detailed mention was in the School's annual report for 1883. In the following year it was decided to propose a "board of trustees with a managing committee attached to it" as the first step in the formation of the Society.

A meeting of sympathizers was held "for the formation of the proposed Society and the appointment of the Council of Trustees". Among the leading men who attended were: Sir William Wedderburn, one of the founders of the Indian National Congress, M. G. Ranade, who later became a High Court Judge in Bombay, Dr. R. G. Bandarkar, who had already made an international reputation as an orientalist of outstanding ability, M. M. Kunte, an eminent educationalist, and K. P. Gadgil, a renowned barrister. Tilak proposed the main resolution which turned the New English School from a private into a public body to be called the Deccan Education Society. It was agreed that the life members should work steadily to reach their aim of founding a college in the new year. Sir James Fergusson, the then Governor of Bombay, had already expressed his sympathy and support for the ideals of the life members when he visited the New English School the year before and had made a donation of Rs.1,250 which made him the first patron of the Society. As soon as the news of the formation of the Society was published, the Marquis of Ripon, the retiring Viceroy of India, enrolled himself as one of its patrons in December 1884. By the end of that year promises of Rs.75,000 had been secured for the building fund of the college and the stage was set for ushering in the new college.

The Board of Trustees unanimously agreed that Sir James Fergusson should be asked to let the Society name the College after him. In making this request the life members were taking an objective view of his services to India; they knew that towards private education his policy was liberal and sympathetic. *Kesari* and the *Mahratta*, the Society's newspapers, did not hesitate to condemn some of his administrative measures, in particular his too-conservative policy in regard to local self-government in the Province of Bombay. He had been described by *Kesari* as a blend of "the liberal Ripon and the reactionary Lytton". However, his integrity and his liberal approach to education, coupled with his sincere appreciation of the selfless spirit of the members of the Society, influenced them to name the College after him. There was also a practical side to the choice of Sir James's name, for, because of the Governor's intimate association with the venture, the Indian States came forward with large donations. The Maharaja of Kolhapur, the Chief of Miraj, and the Raja of Mudhol each subscribed Rs.10,000 to the College fund.

Other Princes, like the Chief of Sangli, contributed equally generously and so a sound financial foundation was laid and Fergusson College became a reality on Friday, January 2nd, 1885.

The College was temporarily housed in Gadre Wada, Poona, until a new building for it could be constructed. Apte was the first Principal and taught Sanskrit; Kelkar taught English; Agarkar, history and logic; Gole, physics; and Tilak, mathematics. Late in the year Mr. G. K. Gokhale joined the Society as a life-member, an event which was to have a far-reaching effect not only on the Society's future, but also on India's evolution. In the beginning he was much attracted by Tilak's example and personality. But, as fate would have it, he and Tilak became rivals in everything they did. Gokhale stood for moderation in politics and an advanced outlook on social reform. Tilak took the opposite view. He preached ary and a man of rigid principles. Both were men of indomitable will and determination. A clash was inevitable. It came less than two years after Gokhale joined the Society and led to Tilak's resignation from it. All their lives these two men laboured in the service of their country, but unfortunately from opposite camps. Gokhale stood for moderation in politics and an advanced outlook on social reform. Tilak took the opposite view. He preached revolutionary tactics in politics and evolutionary moderation in social reform. Gokhale was handsome, mild-looking and fair complexioned. Tilak had a formidable personality and a rugged appearance which no one could describe as handsome. As in temperament, so in appearance, they were incompatible and irreconcilable.

The promoters of Fergusson College were convinced that the spread of Western knowledge was the most urgent need of Indian society, and that this knowledge would prove an ally to reform and a means to national regeneration. In that faith they began a work which the agency of government alone was wholly inadequate to accomplish. They intended to make their college a seminary for Indian educational missionaries who would carry enlightenment all over Maharashtra.

A project aiming so high deserved—and received—generous support from all progressive people, but it also disturbed the peace of mind of some die-hard British Civil Servants and Anglo-Indian editors. They saw this new development as a danger to British rule. The *Times of India*, while admitting the legitimacy of the ambition

of the founders of the New English School in forming themselves into a public educational body, expressed its fear that the Society might be destined "to have momentous effects on the future of India".

Mr. Lee Warner, the Director of Public Instruction, was not less perturbed. "A native society at Poona," he wrote, "which is generally called the 'Patriotic Society', has lately started Fergusson College, and attracted, by an appeal to patriotism, the very best turn-out from our high schools which the educated ranks of the Brahmin and other Hindu society in Poona can afford. It believes that it will out-distance all rivals in the examination room. It argues that the salaries paid to teachers afford no index to their value. The College wishes to be largely independent of any European element in its lecture rooms and to impress upon its students the patriotic sentiments of its independent founders. *The experiment has no parallel in any other city in India and is interesting from other points of view than the educational aspect.*"

Unmindful of the fact that the British bureaucracy was already casting an evil eye on their work, Tilak and his co-workers went on building the reputation of their college, which soon became a by-word for efficient national education, and pupils flocked to join it from all over the country. University prizes and scholarships became the monopoly of the students of Tilak and his colleagues. The Government was so impressed by the Society's work that they offered to let it take over the management of the Deccan College, which was a Government institution. For various reasons, but principally because the Government wanted to have two European professors on the staff, the life-members, however, could not agree to this offer. In view of this proposal voluntarily made by the Government, it is understandable that the organizers of the Society hoped ultimately to take over most of the educational activities then directed by the Government. They had earlier expressed their readiness to take charge of government high schools all over Maharashtra within ten years. But before this plan could come to anything, their public activities, and particularly their writings in *Kesari* and *Mahratta*, brought them into conflict with the Government, and the exchange of views on this subject between the Society and the authorities came to an end.

Differences of opinion also arose among the members of the

Society. The main point at issue between Tilak and some of his colleagues was "Should members be permitted to carry on work other than that of the Society in order to supplement their incomes?" He argued that the Society must be conducted on the strictly Jesuit principles to which the members had subscribed, and that any outside earnings must therefore be handed over to the common fund. To quote Tilak, "Self denial and self reliance have been our watchwords; they were the mainsprings of our action. The constitution of the Deccan Education Society . . . was mainly based on these principles and the bye-laws of the Managing Board were framed on the model of the regulations of missionary bodies." He maintained, therefore, that the members had taken a vow of poverty and they had no right to make a private fortune. The Society's life-members received equal pay and had equal rights; but as the monthly salary of Rs.75 was not high, it was also provided that under special circumstances and in cases of hardship gratuities might be granted in addition to the monthly salary. Further, on the express suggestion of Tilak the member's life was insured for Rs.3,000.

In the early years—until the Government grant was received in 1886—the life-members received only Rs.40 per month. In certain cases a higher payment was made to meet pressing needs and loans were advanced on occasion. But on the other hand Chiplonkar and Tilak took nothing for the first year. The members worked, in fact, on the principle of "Take what little you need and do all you can". It is also true that before the formation of the Society some members had already started businesses which they did not give up or hand over to the Society. Chiplonkar ran a lithographic press and a bookshop and Apte wrote textbooks for schools and colleges. When the Society began to receive grants from the Government the financial position improved and the managing board decided to give Rs.400 per annum to all life-members and Rs.150 to teachers. A tolerable competence was thus secured to the life-members in 1886, and just one year afterwards the controversy over the interpretation of the principle of self-sacrifice began.

Tilak seemed to be of the opinion that whatever happened before the Society was formed was nobody's business, but now that the members had solemnly covenanted to abide by certain principles they must adhere to them at any cost. His colleagues who opposed

this purist view argued that the original principles of the Society were drawn up in the exuberance of their youthful enthusiasm and ought not to be interpreted literally. Agarkar and Gokale thought that the rules could be amended in the same way as the articles of association of a joint stock company, if the majority of the shareholders so wished. They did not, of course, formally propose to alter the fundamental principles of selfless service, devotion to duty and a vow of poverty. In theory, perhaps, they may not have disagreed with Tilak, but in practice they did not like the rigid application of the principles. Clearly theirs was a view which appeared a little selfish, even though it was based on actual experience and had the advantage of being a working compromise.

For three years from February 1887, to December 1890, this controversy continued. All efforts to bridge the gulf between the two factions failed. In the end the majority of the members followed the easier path and defeated Tilak's straight and narrow interpretation.

He had fought on what he considered to be basic principles and as he could not bring himself to compromise he decided to resign. In a detailed letter dated December 15th, 1890, he set forth his reasons and tendered his resignation. It is a revealing document of more than 15,000 words and it covers every aspect of the controversy. We quote below the concluding paragraphs:

"I have always considered that self-sacrifice and self-negation are essential to the success of an institution like ours. That is the only test by which we shall be judged and by which we shall have to stand or fall, and naturally I resented any proposal which to me appeared to depart even in the least from that standard. As I value the welfare and permanency of the institutions started by us, my choice now lies between one of the two alternatives. My continuing with you will, I am sure, never secure any more harmony and we shall always be quarrelling. Such a condition of things will never secure permanency to our school and college. At the same time, if I go away, though I know the original principles will suffer, there will be more harmony and less squabbles. When I place these two alternatives before me, the desire with which I joined in starting the institution and the anxiety of seeing it placed on a permanent footing make me think that however disagreeable it may be to me personally, I cannot do better than ask your permission to go away. I assure you that it was only after a great struggle with my own

feelings that I have come to this resolve. In fact I am giving up now my life's ideal, but the thought that only by separating myself from it shall I serve it best, is my consolation."

Ironically enough, the meeting of the board of trustees and life-members which was to witness the drama of the final parting of Tilak and his associates, took place in the "Cordiality Room", a top-floor room in the Gadre Wada, which was set aside as a meeting place for members to relax and have friendly discussions. Everyone present was conscious of the catastrophe but no one spoke. As Tilak rose to leave the room he looked wistfully at the ornate mahogany canopy overhead and attempted to say good-bye, but he was so overcome with memories that he left without saying a word. He was no longer that stern and stoic figure who marshalled his facts and figures so relentlessly in private or public debates. The wrench was too much for him; he burst into tears. The resignation scene revealed him to his colleagues as a man of warm sympathies and noble weaknesses. His tears and his covered face were eloquent of his affection for them and the institution which had been built up by their common self-sacrifice and devotion.

It will not be out of place to note at this point that Tilak's first eleven years of public life were devoted to the spread of English education in India. He was convinced that the emancipation of the country could only come with the spread of English education. Indeed he and his fellow worker, Vishnushastri Chiplonkar, agreed that "the English language was, like the milk of the tigress", a strong diet. If the youth of the country was brought up on it, Tilak thought, India's liberation could not be long delayed. He was ever ready to uphold Indian tradition, culture and religion, but he was no narrow-minded bigot in his outlook. He appreciated the impact on the Indian mind of English history and democratic thought which opened up the vista of Swaraj for India. He sincerely believed what Macaulay had so eloquently said: ". . . It may be that the public mind of India may expand under our system till it has outgrown that system; . . . that, having become instructed in European knowledge, they (Indians) may, in some future age, demand European institutions. Whether such a day will ever come I know not. But never will I attempt to avert or to retard it. Whenever it comes it will be the proudest day in English history."

II. TILAK THE JOURNALIST

Retrospectively speaking, however, it was a good thing that Tilak left the Society as in a way, perhaps, it had been hampering the full play of his genius. He was cut out for a much bigger role than that of a schoolteacher. As we shall see, his loss to the Society was a great gain to India. From now on he was free to devote his whole energy to the political freedom of India, and he became her philosopher and guide in the struggle to free herself from foreign control.

As a member of the Deccan Education Society Tilak received a monthly salary of Rs.75 (£5 10*s.* 0*d.*). A married man with the responsibility of maintaining a growing family, not to mention several dependent relatives, he now had to think of ways and means of earning money to keep his household going. In partnership with two friends he opened a cotton-ginning factory at Latur, in the territory of the Nizam of Hyderabad. He also started a class in Law to coach students who intended to take a diploma course to qualify themselves for High Court Pleaderships. In a short time, the law class became a flourishing venture and although at first he ran it single-handed, before long Tilak had to look for other lecturers among the lawyers who were then making a name at the Poona Bar. He himself taught the more difficult subjects—Law of Evidence, Contract Law, Hindu Law and Law of Equity. His lectures on Hindu Law are said to have been as popular as they were learned and exhaustive. It is on record that they were "so lucid that even practising lawyers took time off to attend them". Indeed, at this time, he was contemplating writing a commentary on Hindu Law, but the project, unfortunately, never went beyond the preliminary sketch of the work.

When Agarkar gave up the editorship of *Kesari*, Tilak took it over along with that of the *Mahratta*, and became the sole proprietor of the two newspapers which, at the time of their purchase, were running at a loss—they had a debt of Rs. 7,000 (£525) when Tilak bought them. Many of his friends thought it a foolhardy venture to take over the newspapers with such heavy liabilities, but Tilak knew what he was doing. He realized the urgent need for propaganda and was confident of his ability to make the papers pay. And indeed, under his guidance they soon became a financial success as well as powerful vehicles for spreading his revolutionary thoughts and


केसरी.

वर्ष १. पुणें:—मंगळवार तारीख ४ जानेवारी १८८१. अंक १.

The first issue of the *Kesari*, Tuesday, January 4th, 1881

ideas. It is not too much to say that his editorship forms a landmark in the development of true Indian nationalism.

Tilak was a great writer in every sense of the term yet, oddly enough, he was a writer who disliked writing. Most of his journalistic essays were dictated by him and therefore his articles read like speeches. This fact served to increase their effectiveness, for when his views on heated issues were read to groups in the villages—this was the usual way of spreading the message of his newspapers—people accepted them as if Tilak were speaking to them in person. His style was always direct and his sentences short and crisp. His writings were crystal-clear and went straight to the heart of his readers. They were full of quotations from the ancient Sanskrit works, popular sayings, historical parallels, apt metaphors and, above all, pregnant with forceful and original ideas.

English observers, too, writing of Tilak, recognized the enormous influence of his journalism. Nevinson writes: "The *Kesari* was the first newspaper printed in a vernacular—Marathi—to gain any noticeable circulation among the educated Indians, and had the distinction of becoming famous throughout the peninsula." G. T. Garatt, a retired Indian Civil Servant, however, wrote of Tilak as one who "organized what can only be described as 'stunts' with much the same genius and success as Lord Northcliffe in his war-time propaganda". But even this remark is an admission of Tilak's success.

Tilak did not "invent" stories; neither was he interested in cheap journalism in the Northcliffe mould. *Kesari* was produced not to entertain the people, but to instruct and guide them. It was a newspaper for the people and its purpose was to make them think and act. Tilak was an editor-philosopher who had a message to give to his readers and he gave it with fire and imagination. There was nothing mealy-mouthed about his writing. In a downright, frank and robust style week after week Tilak poured out his soul on day-to-day problems, economic questions, philosophical ideas, historical researches, literature and art. Whatever subject he touched, he gave it a new lustre and lucidity. There lay the secret of his success.

Tilak was not only a great journalist, he was also a man of letters and a recognized scholar of Sanskrit, mathematics, astronomy and history. His two works, *Orion* and the *Arctic Home in the Vedas*, are

perfect examples of his ability to approach the most abstruse subject by original and novel methods. His conclusions were as original as his methods—indeed, almost startling, for in these two essays he proved that the antiquity of the Vedas goes back nearly 5,000 years B.C. and that the original Aryan race came from the North Polar regions which were at one time habitable. His third work, the *Gita Rahsasya*, apart from the original interpretation it gives to the text of the *Gita*, is a mine of learning, not only on philosophical, but also on practical everyday problems, and is written in a lucid, straightforward and forceful Marathi prose. It is a socio-political thesis based on the most sacred book of the Hindus and has moulded the lives of millions of Indians since it was first published in 1915.

These three works bear lasting witness to Tilak's powers as an original thinker and writer, and prove that he was not merely a politician but also a savant. But it must be admitted it was not so much by his scholarship as by his journalistic writings that he established his claim to leadership and captured the heart and soul of India. His newspaper *Kesari* won popular support and recognition by its direct style, its masterly exposition of its point of view and the untiring energy of the personality behind it. It never minced matters in driving its own viewpoint home to its vast reading public. The average reader must be appealed to by forcefulness and clear presentation: the more forceful the writing, the better he understands it. *Kesari* was written in a style which gripped the imagination of its readers and Tilak's vivid conversational use of the Marathi language gave a new turn to the thinking of his readers, his students and his countrymen. The editor of *Subhodha Patrika*, an influential reformist weekly, wrote that Tilak's writings had a bullet-like, piercing quality —"the shot told because it was meant to tell"; and this was because "behind *Kesari* there was an editor who knew his facts thoroughly, who knew the art of selecting the right thing at the right moment, and whose powerful pen was wielded with a single pointed aim to make his political gospel a living sentiment among the people—and above all who was absolutely indifferent to dangers in furthering the cause of his country's independence which was the supreme aim of his life".

The triumph of *Kesari* was the triumph of Tilak. He showed by his writings what a powerful weapon journalism can become in the hands of an astute, far-seeing, forceful and first-rate man of ability

and letters. Tilak, in addition to being a scholar, was a man of practical genius possessed of unswerving determination, and with the insight of a born strategist brushed aside everything that interfered with his progress.

In an interview with Kaka Kalelkar, one of the lieutenants of Mahatma Gandhi, Tilak once expressed his own views on his journalistic ventures and the reasons which lay behind *Kesari*'s success. "When I started *Kesari*," he said, "people asked me why I was going to publish it in Marathi. They said, 'No one will read it.' But I was determined to publish it in Marathi, and I replied that my decision was final. They then asked me to reserve at least two columns for English material. Again I replied categorically that it was impossible; *Kesari* was for the people and the people were sure to give it a rousing reception. Today the *Mahratta* (which is an English weekly) has to be financed from the funds of *Kesari*. When we started *Kesari* we had to make almost a new language. In the old Marathi there was plenty of writing on devotion and philosophy; also the ballad writers had introduced an element of heroics into it. But to discuss serious matters of politics, to attack and rebut opponents, to crush them with satire and ridicule, for all this the old Marathi was of very little use. And so we were forced to develop a new terminology to make our writings effective. A man who feels intensely, who is burning with new ideas, finds words to express them. He becomes, indeed, capable of creating a new language."

5

SOCIAL REACTIONARY OR REVOLUTIONARY?

Tilak's resignation from the Deccan Education Society and his taking over of the financial and editorial control of the two newspapers coincided with widespread controversy on two important social issues—the education of girls by Christians and the Age of Consent (Consummation of Marriage) Bill. By opposing the so-called social reformers in Poona on both these issues Tilak earned the reputation, which he did not deserve, of being a reactionary in social and religious matters.

The controversy about female education centred round the activities of Pandita Ramabai, a woman of great personality and talent, who had an unusual career. She was born into a learned Brahmin family of slender means and married very young, but was soon widowed, and then drifted to Calcutta. Although poor, she had the good fortune to possess a wide knowledge of Sanskrit which was to be of great use to her. Her fluent speeches in Sanskrit and her extraordinary debating powers made a great impression on the learned society of Calcutta. The family of the poet Rabindranath Tagore took a special interest in her and she soon became famous all over India.

With this background she returned to Poona and started a women's institute. But she quickly discovered that her lack of knowledge of English handicapped her in her work. To overcome this she made friends with Miss Hurford, the superintendent of the Girls' High School in Poona, and this friendship led to her journeying to England and being converted to Christianity. During her stay in London she was greatly impressed by the developments in female education and the higher—and improving—status of women in England, and by what was being done for the so-called "fallen

women". All this helped her to make up her mind to accept Christianity and devote her life to the emancipation of her sex in India.

In a few years she had gained sufficient command of English to enable her to lecture in Oxford, Cambridge and other places of learning. She was appointed lecturer in Sanskrit at Cheltenham Ladies' College and her reputation spread to America, which she was invited to visit. There she was greatly helped by American missionary societies who sent her back to India with enough funds to enable her to devote her life to the cause of women's education. Returning to Bombay in 1889, she founded her famous Sharada-Sadan, with the object of taking care of "destitute high-caste widows". To avoid any misunderstanding about the aims and objects of the school it was made clear at the start that the school would not actively preach Christianity or try to make converts.

Pandita Ramabai's principal object was to give education to the women of India. However, since she was receiving generous financial help from missionary societies she can hardly be blamed if she thought it her duty to do some "Christian work" at the same time as her educational work. In fairness to Ramabai it must be said that at the beginning, at least, she did not take advantage of the helpless condition of the women who came to her "Sadan" for food and shelter. She did not go out of her way to induce them to become Christians. But the whole atmosphere of the institution was so charged with a typical missionary spirit that it was bound to make a deep impression on the inmates of the Sadan, some of whom, of their own accord, began to read the Bible and attend Church prayers.

Ramabai's experiment was watched with all the more interest because it was started by an Indian Christian woman of great reputation and was supported by prominent leaders like Justice Ranade and Justice Telang. Her work was praised and admired by many but there were also some who looked upon it with some degree of scepticism. *Kesari* was among the doubters who suspected that the school might be used to gain Christian converts, but had decided to say nothing against it until tangible evidence came to light. Before long such evidence came to Tilak's hand. In December 1889, the *Christian Weekly* of New York published a report on the progress of the Sadan in the course of which it said: "At present there are seven young widows in the Sharada-Sadan, two of

whom have expressed their love of Christianity. They regularly attend the daily prayers with Ramabai. The institution gives full freedom of faith and that this freedom has done no harm to anybody suggests that the Sadan is clearly a Christian institute."

Kesari drew attention to this report and a strong protest was voiced against the activities of Ramabai. Letters began to appear in the newspapers accusing her of being a hypocrite. It was openly said that the Sharada-Sadan was actively carrying on the work of conversion under the pretext of educating the widows. The public storm became so great that Dr. Bhandarkar and Mr. Justice Ranade had to sever their connection with the Sadan. They wrote to the American sponsors: "We have strong reasons to believe that many of the girls are induced to attend Ramabai's private prayers regularly, and read the Bible, and that Christian doctrines are taught to them. Pandita Ramabai has also shown her active missionary tendencies by asking the parents and guardians of girls to allow them to attend her prayers and, in one case at least, to become Christians themselves; and we are assured that two of the girls have declared to their elders that they have accepted Christ. Such a departure from the original understanding cannot fail in our opinion to shake the stability of the Institute and alienate public sympathy from this work. We are sorry our individual remonstrances with Pandita Ramabai have proved of no avail. If the Sadan is to be conducted as an avowed proselytising institute we must disavow all connection with it."

Further support for the charge of hypocrisy against Pandita Ramabai was provided by one of her relatives, Krishnabai, who was an employee in the Sadan and looked after the institution's provisions and supplies. In a signed letter in *Kesari*, she said: "Hindu girls were not allowed to observe their religious rites and festivals in the Sadan. Nor were they allowed to visit Hindu temples." Tilak also published extracts from Ramabai's speeches which left no room for doubt that she had become an active missionary for spreading the Gospel and so, by converting Hindu women, was directly undermining Hindu society.

When Tilak first attacked the Sharada-Sadan, many so-called social reformers accused him of being a reactionary; they called him the enemy of progress and the champion of orthodoxy, but soon realised not only that his exposure of the Sadan was well-founded

but that in making it he had done a service to Hindu society by his timely warning.

Tilak was clearly heartened by his success in exposing Ramabai, which gave him greater confidence and authority when he took up his stand in the controversy over the Age of Consent Bill.

No intelligent Indian could shut his eyes to the evils of child marriage, which contributed very largely to maternal and infantile mortality. The evil was so widespread that it affected the whole framework of society. Boys and girls were married off by their parents, while still little more than babies, and cases of pregnancy of girls aged eleven and twelve were not uncommon in Tilak's days. Many girls under thirteen suffered from osteomalacia as a result of early childbirth. The figures for 1880-91 are not available but the reader can easily imagine the state of affairs seventy years ago by studying the figures for 1921 and 1931, by which time every attempt was made to educate the people and the habit of reading newspapers was steadily increasing.

These figures are reproduced from the excellent book *Child Marriage* by the late Dr. Eleanor Rathbone, Member of Parliament for the Combined English Universities:

INCREASE IN NUMBERS OF CHILD WIVES AND WIDOWS (ALL INDIA)

	1921		1931	
Age	*Wives*	*Widows*	*Wives*	*Widows*
0–1	9,066	759	44,082	1,515
1–5	209,397	14,380	757,770	29,365
5–10	2,016,687	102,293	4,200,534	105,482
10–15	6,330,207	279,124	7,269,208	185,339
TOTAL under 15	8,565,357	396,556	12,271,594	321,701

Total Population 318,942,480 352,837,778

In 1890 the Government sponsored a Bill on the advice and pressure of a well-meaning Parsee publicist, Beharamji Malbari, who was a visionary idealist and an uncompromising opponent of early marriages and their premature consummation. He had agitated

through his newspaper to rouse Hindu opinion in support of his reform, but without much success. Thereupon he went to London and persuaded the Secretary of State for India to support his idea. He, in turn, urged the Viceroy and his Council to prepare a draft Bill and publish it so as to sound out public opinion on the subject. The Bill's chief points were these: (1) Cohabitation by a husband and his wife under twelve years of age should be made a penal offence; (2) A wife who had been married in infancy should be entitled to have the marriage dissolved, if she so wished, on attaining her majority; (3) A husband who had married his wife when she was an infant should not be allowed to sue for the restitution of conjugal rights.

The Bill received the enthusiastic support of all the veteran reformers but was violently opposed by Tilak and his orthodox friends. He did not deny the harmful effects of early marriage but he argued that "Education and not legislation is the proper method for eradicating the evil". His greatest objection to the Bill was that it gave officials of a foreign race the chance to interfere in the religious life and beliefs of Hindu society. He looked on the Bill as the thin end of the wedge which would eventually break up the social and religious independence of the Hindus, and was horrified at the idea that an ancient community should in this way be deprived of its religious as well as its political independence. At the same time, he made the constructive suggestion that the age at which a marriage might be legally consummated should be the attainment of puberty and not an arbitrary age such as twelve years as suggested in the Bill. He also pointed out that as the Hindu population was in general not yet ready for the reform, the Bill should be made applicable only to those who believed in its necessity. His idea was that, as education spread, the people would gradually follow the example of the progressive section of the community and the presence on the Statute Book of such a measure would help them to give up the old and harmful custom.

All over Bombay Presidency Tilak set to work energetically to organize the orthodox Hindu opposition. Public meetings were held to condemn the Bill and were attended by thousands. The organizing of public opposition in this way was a novel experience for the people. They had never before assembled in such huge numbers to denounce a measure proposed by the Government. There was

nothing political in this opposition, but the very fact that the people were opposing a Bill put forward by an all-powerful Government had a tremendous psychological effect in bringing new supporters to the campaign. Like a snowball, the agitation grew in size and momentum. It spread from Maharashtra to Bengal, Madras and other provinces of India. In the Imperial Legislative Council, even, there were loud echoes of Tilak's opposition, and the European benches were shocked to see Sir Romesh Chandra Mitra, a man of moderate views and gentle manner, siding with the opposition. He warned the members of the Government that he would oppose the Bill tooth and nail and that, if they still persisted in passing it into law, "it would create deep discontent among the people of India". Dramatically he asked the Government to imagine what the British people would say and do if their customs and religious scruples were similarly flouted by an alien government, "if" (he instanced) "a law were enacted in Britain requiring dead bodies to be cremated rather than buried".

No government in any other country would have put such a law on the statute book in the face of bitter and almost unanimous opposition from the people. But here again, political considerations —the upholding of the Government's prestige—prevailed, and the Bill was passed on March 19th, 1891. Sir Andrew Richard Scoble, Law Member of the Council, frankly said that he preferred "to be wrong with Professor Bhandarkar, Mr. Justice Telang and Diwan Bahadur Raghunath Rao, than be right with Pandit Sasadhar and Professor Tilak".

Tilak realized that the Government and their reformist friends had won the battle but he was determined to deny them the fruits of victory. He therefore issued a ten-point programme and invited the reformers to subscribe to it. At a public meeting in Poona, he proposed a resolution recommending punishment for those who broke the new marriage law which had been enacted on the initiative of the reformers. The draft resolution suggested a few immediate reforms: no girl should be married before the age of sixteen, and no boy before the age of twenty; men over forty should be prohibited from marrying or, alternatively, should only be allowed to marry widows; no woman should be made to cut her hair off on becoming a widow; and so on.

Yet, surprisingly enough, those who were loudest in their support

of the Age of Consent Bill were the first to refuse to put their signatures to this resolution. This exposure of their hypocrisy discredited them in the eyes of the Indian masses and went a long way towards firmly establishing Tilak as their indisputable leader.

Ever since this episode enemies of Tilak have described him as a social reactionary, and a superficial view of his activities and writings might, perhaps, seem to confirm this opinion. But it was the methods used for introducing these reforms, the fact that they were legally imposed by foreign rulers, rather than the reforms themselves, that Tilak opposed. He maintained that the reformers were attacking only the fringe of the central problem, rather than its core. He had no time for reforms by kind permission of the British Government; Indian problems must be solved by Indians. Therefore for Tilak the essential reform, and the one that must come first, was the freedom of the country. Once political independence was gained, the way was open for the introduction, through the gradual education of the people, of reforms which would do away with social and economic evils. The reforms which have been introduced in India since 1947 are a striking proof that Tilak was right in adopting this attitude.

So it is not strange that on almost every occasion he seemed to oppose any move to reform the structure of Hindu society, and that, in the stormy controversies over social reform, he condemned men like Mr. Justice Ranade and Dr. Bhandarkar, who made up the progressive group in those days.

There were also bitter controversies, such as that over the bad habit of drinking, which arose directly from the powerful impact of Western civilization on India's culture, for there were many English-educated Indians who, accepting everything Western as superior to the Indian way of life, gloried in aping the every-day habits of their rulers. Tilak's opposition to the reformist movement was a violent reaction to this sort of servile and unintelligent imitation.

Now that these controversies have long since died down, we can make an objective survey of Tilak's attitude to social reforms and the basic stand he took in opposing them. Right from the first Tilak had contended that the lack of political freedom was the root of all the evils in the body politic of India. He therefore decided to pursue the difficult path of politics to the exclusion of everything else. He is reported to have told his friends (of course in a lighter vein)

that he would arrange for the remarriage of a thousand widows on the day India gained political independence.

It should be noted that Tilak, who frankly admitted his firm belief in the superiority of the Hindu religion and culture over all others, was not a bigot by temperament. The proof of this is seen in his fearless criticism of religious practices which were repugnant to his conscience or which he regarded as anti-social and harmful to Hindu society. In point of fact he was no less revolutionary in social matters than he was in politics. It is true that his whole life was devoted to the cause of Indian independence and that it was his uncompromising opposition to the British Raj that made the masses worship him. Nevertheless his claim to be regarded as a social revolutionary is unchallengeable.

Tilak's political opponents, who painted him as an orthodox reactionary, forgot that he practised most of the reforms the social reformers wanted Hindu society to adopt. He sent his daughters to school to learn English and did not marry them until they were sixteen; he did not observe untouchability and caste distinction in his household nor did he do so in his social and political relations with the lower castes.

Here is a case in point that happened in 1894. The Ganapati procession was taking place, with thousands of young men and women singing devotional songs and playing music. Tilak was accompanying the procession when suddenly his attention was attracted by a shrill cry from a window in one of the houses on the processional route. He looked up and saw a boy of seven or eight crying loudly while his mother tried to pacify him. Tilak stopped to ask why the boy was crying. The mother did not know what to say —she was shy and timid, perhaps terrified. At last she told him that her son wanted his Ganapati to be taken to the river for the immersion ceremony along with other Ganapatis, but she dared not let him do this as her family belonged to the untouchable class. Tilak was moved to tears; he could not bear to see an innocent child suffer. He went into the house, took the Ganapati idol and placed it by the side of his own and the boy joined the procession holding on to Tilak's hand.

Later, in 1918, addressing a special conference for Untouchables in Bombay, he declared before an audience of more than seven thousand people: "If God were to tolerate untouchability I would

not recognise Him as God at all. . . . Although I have appeared amongst you in person for the first time, believe me, you have been in my mind all the time. . . . I do not deny that it was the Brahman rule that introduced the practice of untouchability. This is a cancer in the body of Hindu society and we must eradicate it at all costs."[1]

Who can deny that Tilak was clear-sighted enough to visualize the far-reaching consequences of his agitation for independence? More than once he described his political ideal as "the Swaraj of oilmen and sellers of betel-nut leaves", by which he meant the toiling masses, irrespective of caste and creed. A close student of the French philosopher, Rousseau, and the Italian prophet of modern Europe, Mazzini, Tilak could not have failed to see that the political democracy of his dream must inevitably lead to social and economic equality.

The rationale of his opposition to the social reforms advocated by men like Agarkar and Bhandarkar will be discussed later. At this stage we quote an extract from Tilak's reply to Dr. Sir Raghunath Purushottam Paranjpe, one time member of the India Council in London, who had attacked him for refusing his signature to a manifesto condemning untouchability: "Mr. Paranjpe knows full well that I am for removing all caste distinctions regarding inter-dining and untouchability. I have said so many a time, but I am not prepared to take up the work of actual propaganda in this matter, as many know, and I refuse to sign a manifesto which would have clearly thrown that responsibility on me." Herein lies the essence of Tilak's opposition to the social reformers. He believed in one thing at a time. He was convinced that all the social reforms such as the removal of untouchability, the remarriage of widows, female education, prohibition of early marriages, could be achieved without difficulty once the country gained political independence.

Tilak's career can well be described as a whirlpool of controversy, sometimes about social reforms, sometimes about political ideals and ways and means of achieving them and sometimes about purely personal matters. In none of the conflicts that flared up in his lifetime did he give quarter to his enemies or ask for any. He fought his opponents with logic, supported by irrefutable religious authorities, but never lowered himself to attacking them unfairly. In all his

[1] Vithal Ramji Shinde in *Reminiscences and Anecdotes about Lokamanya Tilak*, edited by S. V. Bapat.

conflicts with social reformers Tilak never yielded his ground; the secret of his success lay in his habit of making sure of his facts, which he would collect and verify with great care. He preferred blunt, straightforward and matter-of-fact replies to the retort courteous, and when the occasion demanded, he could be rude also, if his adversaries were guilty of using unfair tactics for gaining a temporary advantage over him.

An episode which took place in 1890 throws some interesting light both on the social conditions in India sixty or sixty-five years ago and on the fighting spirit of Tilak. On this occasion, he became not the idol of the orthodox section of the community, but its most hated victim. Today it may sound very silly, but in those days it was something of a storm, literally a storm in a tea-cup.

Tilak, with other leaders and men of learning in Poona, attended a lecture given by a clergyman named Rivington in a Christian missionary school. The organizers provided refreshments consisting of tea, biscuits and cakes, for the distinguished guests. Most of them innocently drank the tea served by the Mission. Next morning, however, they had a rude shock when they saw that the newspapers had splashed the news of the tea-party in screaming headlines and had also published the names of those who had attended the meeting and taken tea in the Mission. Tilak's name was, of course, mentioned most prominently.

Now, according to the orthodox rules of the Hindu religion, a Brahmin, or indeed any member of a Hindu caste, makes himself an outcast if he eats or drinks with a non-Hindu person. It was a grave offence, therefore, to allow himself to be polluted by drinking tea at a non-Hindu gathering. The orthodox faction which had come to look on Tilak as one of its own, could not bear to find him among the renegades, and Sardar Natu, who was a rich landlord and a leader of the diehard orthodox Hindu opinion, immediately demanded his excommunication at a public meeting which was held to condemn "this outrageous inroad on the Hindu religion".

He had reckoned, however, without Tilak. Armed with his profound knowledge of Hindu law and scriptures he hit back and made havoc of his critics' arguments, and so devastating was his counter-attack that the opposition was completely silenced. However, he had no intention of making lasting enemies of his former friends, so he suggested that such minor social irregularities should

be set right by a kind of religious ceremony which would purge the offender of the so-called sin. At the same time, he maintained that merely sipping tea, which was only a mixture of sugar, milk, water and tea leaves, did not constitute an offence and therefore did not call for any purification. "There was no sin in taking tea, from anybody," he declared.

However, to pacify his angry followers, Tilak did undergo a sort of penance and there the episode ended. Here lay the fundamental difference between Tilak and other social reformers. He wanted to take the people with him and was therefore extremely careful not to hurt their religious feelings. He pointed out that social reformers would never succeed by ridiculing the age-old customs and habits of the people, which were hallowed by long practice and tradition. When his progressive opponents quoted the example of Luther, who reformed the Christian faith, he neatly turned the tables on them by pointing out: "Luther succeeded because he believed and respected the tenets of Christianity. He did not flout the Bible. Let our reforming friends follow the great Christian leader and respect the Hindu scriptures and they will see a miraculous change in the attitude of the people."

The secret of Tilak's hold on the masses lay in his deeply-held respect for the religion of his forefathers. All that was ancient and truly noble in the Hindu tradition was sacred to him. Indeed, his profound reverence for and knowledge of the Vedas were his sheet-anchor amid all the social and religious upheavals of his day, which only too easily became tempestuous storms at the slightest change in the atmosphere.

6

TILAK AND THE MUSLIMS—THE REVIVAL MOVEMENTS

Just as Tilak earned the undeserved reputation as a reactionary in social matters because he opposed the unrealistic attitude of the reformers, so he was dubbed anti-Muslim because he stood up for the Hindu community when the Muslims in Poona and other cities caused riots by attacking Hindu temples and processions. Serious disturbances took place in Bombay and Poona in 1893 and 1894, and resulted in the death of nearly seventy-five people and serious injury to three hundred others.

We shall not go into all the details of these riots, but it is important to note that from the outset Tilak pointed out that there were three, and not two, parties concerned in the Hindu-Muslim disputes: the Hindus, the Muslims, and the foreign Government. Unless and until the Government was prepared to hold the balance and act impartially, the two communities were bound to feel unsure about their position.

The police seemed to be always on the side of the Muslims. The inquiries held after the riots proved beyond doubt that the Muslims' attacks on the Hindus were not always spontaneous, but had been planned. It was established, for instance, that on August 11th, 1893, the Muslims had no weapons when they entered the Jumma mosque in Bombay for midday prayer; yet when they came out they were armed with staves and without any provocation rushed to the nearby Hindu temple. That may have been the signal for a general attack in other parts of Bombay and, certainly, on that day the riots spread to Bhendi Bazaar, Kamathi Pura and Grant Road, where the Muslim hooligans attacked men and women and desecrated Hindu temples. Next morning the Hindus organized in self-defence and

successfully retaliated. This pattern was repeated in scores of places all over Bombay Presidency.

When similar riots occurred in Poona, the police arrested hundreds of rioters of both communities and threatened to deal with them summarily. But Tilak raised one question (a perfectly legitimate one): Was it proper to punish the Hindus along with the Muslims, when it was evident that the Muslims were the original aggressors and that the Hindus had retaliated in self-defence? In one of the riots in Poona, a personal friend of Tilak, Sardar Tatya Saheb Natu, was arrested. He had been leading the procession of Ganapati when it was attacked by a gang of Muslims near Daruwala Bridge. Strangely enough, not a single Muslim was arrested when this incident occurred, but poor Natu and his friends were taken into police custody and were tried before the District Judge, Mr. Jacob, helped by five assessors—two Christians, two Parsees and one Hindu who unanimously found the accused not guilty, a verdict which Mr. Jacob confirmed. The Anglo-Indian newspapers, bitterly disappointed at this decision, went so far as to publish a completely unfounded story (given the lie by Mr. Jacob the next day) alleging that there had been a difference of opinion between the judge and the assessors.

Writing on the question of Hindu-Muslim riots, Tilak strongly criticised the Government's partiality to the Muslims. He accused it of practising the policy of "divide and rule", and exposed the hollowness of the Government's appeal to the leaders of the two communities for conciliation. For, he said, the leaders to whom the appeal is made are of different metal from the rioters and, lacking both the will and the courage to face physical danger, are not likely to command much respect. Their advice will therefore have no effect on the hooligans, whether Hindu or Muslim. Moreover, he pointed out, by making such an appeal the British bureaucracy was trying to assume the role of a neutral power which, in reality, it was not. For it favoured the Muslims, and Tilak quoted numerous incidents, drawn from all over the country, to show how British officials were suppressing the time-honoured rights and usages of the Hindus in order to appease the Muslim community. One of these was at Yeola in the Presidency of Bombay, where the annual procession of the god Balaji used, in accordance with long-established custom, to pass by a mosque, while the Hindu devotees played

music in front of the god's image. Until 1893 the Muslims had never objected to the procession going past the mosque, but in that year they attacked the Hindus violently and a riot occurred. The Hindus approached the authorities and asked for protection in the future. The District Magistrate and the Police Commissioner were satisfied that justice was on the side of the Hindus but the necessary protection failed to materialize and the Hindu procession was attacked the next year as well. Not only was no police protection given, but the Hindus were even advised not to stage the procession at all. From this the Muslims drew the obvious conclusion that the Government was afraid of them. In these circumstances, Tilak argued, it was the plain duty of the Hindus to organize themselves to protect their rights at any cost.

He made his point of view quite clear: "In this affair, just as there is a Hindu and a Muslim party, so there is a Government party as well. It must not be forgotten that this is a triangular fight. Both communities must be allowed to observe their social and religious festivals without let or hindrance, and it is the duty of the Government to help the communities to carry them out without interference from either side. If a Hindu in his religious zeal enters a Muslim locality to save the life of a cow he must be punished for his excess of zeal. In the same way, Muslims who object to the playing of music by the Hindus on the occasion of certain religious festivals must also be punished.

"Lord Harris, the Governor of Bombay, has appealed to the leaders of the Hindu and Muslim communities to maintain peace, but he has forgotten to advise his subordinate officers to act impartially on these occasions."

Writing on August 15th, 1893, he bluntly said: "The Muslims have assumed a boorish and arrogant attitude which is the result of the encouragement they receive from the Government. The British are never tired of telling the people that it is the presence of the English alone which protects the Hindus from the Muslims, an observation which adds to the arrogance of the latter. The real dispute is not between the educated leaders of the two communities; it is to be found among the uneducated and the illiterate. If such people are to be kept under control, the Government must abandon the policy of favouring one at the cost of the other. The rigours of law must be applied to both equally and impartially. If this policy

of strict neutrality is not observed by the Government, then the Hindus will have to fight in self-defence as they did in Bombay."

Tilak protested that he hated communal riots and that he had no intention of hurting the feelings of his Muslim countrymen but he added that "the Hindus must never forget that friendship and good relations can exist only between people of equal strength". And from then on he devoted himself to organizing the Hindus and making them strong enough to live in peace with the Muslims on a footing of equality. One of the means he used to bind together and strengthen the Hindu community was the annual celebration of the two festivals which he founded, the Ganesh and the Shivaji.

In his speeches on Shivaji Tilak made it clear that the festival was meant to provide a focus for the national spirit and had no anti-Muslim idea behind it. Indeed, far from himself being anti-Muslim, he had come to the help of Muslims in difficulties in times of plague and famine. Patriotic Muslims understood Tilak's high ideals and devotion to the cause of Indian rejuvenation, and many individual Muslims were among his staunchest supporters. In later years Tilak disproved the contention of his enemies that he was anti-Muslim by bringing the two communities together in a solemn pact, signed by the most prominent leaders of the Hindus and Muslims, among whom was the late Mr. Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan.

A number of British authorities were particularly responsible for circulating the mischievous story that Tilak was anti-Muslim. The most prominent among these mischief-makers was Sir Valentine Chirol, who was sent out to India by *The Times* as its special correspondent. In his book *Indian Unrest* he wrote: "In 1893 some riots in Bombay of a more severe character than usual gave Tilak an opportunity of broadening the new movement by enlisting in its support the old anti-Mohammedan feeling of the people. He not only convoked . . . meetings in which his fiery eloquence denounced the Mohammedans as the sworn foes of Hinduism, but he started an organization known as the "Anti-Cow-Killing Society", which was intended and regarded as a direct provocation to the Mohammedans, who, like ourselves, think it no sacrilege to eat beef."

How wide of the mark these British writers were! Even before the serious Hindu-Muslim riots of 1893–4 Tilak had foreseen the widening gulf between the two communities and had deplored the

unrealistic and aggressive attitude of the Muslims which he put down to their lack of education and to a false pride in their having once been rulers of India. The Anglo-Indian Press continued to misrepresent Tilak as a bigoted Hindu leader dreaming of the Mahratta Empire; newspapers like the *Times of India*, Bombay, and the *Pioneer* of Allahabad were his worst calumniators and carried their vendetta against him to absurd and indecent lengths. This was bound to have some effect on half-educated Muslim youths and even on some of the so-called constitutional leaders among the Hindus. But the thinking Muslims were not, fortunately, taken in by this dishonest propaganda. They showed an awareness of the situation and some of them acted towards Tilak in a spirit of understanding. Two instances of their attitude, both of which happened at the time of his arrest and trial in 1897, show what their real feelings were.

Here is the first. The charge against Tilak was of writing seditious articles, one of which directly concerned the murder of a Muslim general, Afzhul Khan, by Shivaji, the man who ended the Muslim rule in Maharashtra. Hus application for bail in order to prepare his defence was refused by two judges—one Hindu, one English. The Hindu judge was Justice Ranade, a historian of no little ability who had written a notable monograph on Shivaji. He also knew Tilak personally and admired his character, scholarship and courage; yet he would not agree to release Tilak on bail. Two days later the application was renewed. This time it came up for hearing before a Muslim judge, Mr. Justice Badrudin Tyabji, who, like Ranade, knew Tilak and also knew of his part in the Hindu-Muslim riots in Poona and Bombay. In view of the anti-Muslim bias of the article which was the basis of the prosecution, Mr. Justice Tyabji could hardly be expected to allow Tilak bail. But that is precisely what happened. Not only did Tyabji order Tilak's release on bail but in doing so expressed his views on the case in such a manner that it was fairly clear that, if it had been in his power, he would have quashed the case there and then.

And the second instance. While the Muslim judge was releasing Tilak on bail in Bombay, Tilak's friends in Calcutta were busy collecting funds for his defence. More than Rs.16,000 was collected in Bengal for this purpose, and the first and the biggest amount —Rs.7,000—came from the Muslim business firm of Hajee Ahmed

& Hajee Hossain Hajee Abdal. In a covering letter Hajee Ahmed wrote: "The moment the Government arrested him, Mr. Tilak ceased to be a leader of the Hindu community. He is now above all castes, creeds and religions. He is going to be prosecuted for his fight for India, the common motherland of the Muslims and Hindus."

7

THE GANAPATI AND SHIVAJI FESTIVALS

We have already mentioned the two Hindu festivals, the Ganesh and the Shivaji, which Tilak founded. We now come to consider how he did so, and why he thought them important enough to take up a great part of his energies for ten years.

After the suppression of the Indian Mutiny many superficial observers were misled into concluding that Hindu society had reached the end of its tether. Among the Indians they saw lethargy, lack of responsibility and servile imitation of their rulers. Many intellectuals in Bombay and Calcutta had conceded the "superiority" of Christianity, and were impressed by the fact that a handful of British civilians ruled over millions of Hindus and Muslims, and that, too, without needing to parade their military power. Some of them attributed this extraordinary achievement to the rulers' Christian religion and thought that to ape the British in manners, dress, habits of eating and drinking, and even in method of worship was the highest mark of civilization. They believed the best way to emancipate India was to imitate the master-race in every possible way. The Prarthana Samaj of Bombay and Brahmo Samaj of Calcutta were two glaring examples of this psychological surrender of Hindu leaders to the outward form of the Christian way of worship. Like the followers of Christ these Samajists went to their own places of worship, once a week, in each of which the appointed priest read a lesson and preached a sermon exactly as the Christian padre would do on a Sunday morning.

Lala Lajpat Rai, a contemporary of Tilak writes: "... For a time the English-knowing Indian prided himself in imitating his master. He took his dress, he took his cheroot and pipe, and also his cup and beefsteak. He began to live in houses built and furnished in the

English way. He detested Indian life and took pride in being Anglicized. Everything Indian was odious in his eyes. The Indians were barbarians; their religion was a bundle of superstitions; they were dirty people; their customs and manners were uncivilized; they were a set of narrow-minded bigots who did not know that man was born free. . . ."

Tilak saw this imitation and hated it, and hated it most of all when it was "imitation of the West". He declared that this kind of behaviour was a sign of spiritual bankruptcy and moral degradation. He asked, "Some of our so-called educated countrymen can equal the sahib in drinking, but can they aspire to his place and position in the administration of the country?"

What pained him most of all was to see the abjectly dependent condition of the people. He felt particularly unhappy about the educated youth of the country who went after government jobs, which, at any rate, in the 'nineties, were not difficult to get. He held that "the Government Service is demoralizing the most promising intellect of the country. They sell themselves, body and soul, for a little silver and sink into voluntary slavery."

Tilak had come to the conclusion that the Indian people had sunk to the depths of moral degradation and decided to dedicate his life to saving them at any cost. This determination was, indeed, the mainspring of action for him and earned him the title of "The Father of Indian Unrest". But he was more than that. He was the embodiment and the pioneer of Indian nationalism. He realized that the basic weakness of the Indian people lay in the loss of their self-respect and feeling of nationhood. Unless the people's respect for their own history, culture and religion was restored, he felt convinced all talk of political and social emancipation would prove idle and fruitless.

For the next ten years, then, we find him devoting his energies to organizing movements in Maharashtra which aimed at reviving the lost moral dignity and self-esteem of the people.

From his study of Greek history he had learnt how the Olympian Games had developed into a great national festival which built up a national spirit among the many independent city states of Greece. Every fourth year a religious festival in honour of the god Jupiter was held in the plain of Olympia, with sacrifices, processions, and games, while poets and authors recited their compositions and artists

displayed their works. Heralds were sent through all Greece to announce the festival and proclaim a truce to all fighting so that men might come and go in peace during the festival. Though the only prize to be won was a crown of wild olive, thousands came from all over Greece to take part in the Games. Athletes, poets, sculptors, statesmen, philosophers, orators, generals—all met together in friendly contest for the honour of their states and their gods. The Olympian Games thus gradually became a bond of union for all the Greeks, linking them together in peace and love of their country. Tilak was impressed and inspired by this Greek example and resolved to adapt this pattern to the needs of India.

In 1893 he hit on the idea of giving a new direction to the already established forms of worship, and started a revivalist movement. He found in the Ganesh Festival a "Powerful engine for imparting instructions to the masses" which were, he said, "our ultimate court of appeal".

He advised his countrymen to reorganize the festival of Ganesh, the Elephant God. From time immemorial Hindus have worshipped this god with display and ceremony, but the festivities were mostly confined to the household. Friends and relatives dined together and made gifts of sweets to each other, but no public celebrations were held. The ingenuity of Tilak lay in giving the festival a community aspect and making it an effective means of creating national enthusiasm, religious consciousness, and social solidarity.

He organized the Ganesh festival as a vast community celebration which lasted for ten days. Under his guidance, big cities and small villages made the worship of Ganesh a public function to be celebrated with great splendour and with much enthusiasm. People gathered together every evening to see the artistic displays and listen to the music played before the god. Tilak's followers took advantage of these gatherings and spoke on religious subjects to the assembled people. Tilak, who was a profound scholar of Hindu scriptures and mythology, drew liberally on the ancient epics of the Hindus—the Ramayan and the Mahabharat—to illustrate his themes, which were often a slender and thin disguise to the political and economic problems of the day. This religious movement caught the imagination of the people and in less than two years spread to every province of India.

In a recent analysis of Asian nationalism an American writer,

William Holland, has observed that religion played an important role in India where the nationalist movement was characterized by a strain of Hindu revivalism. Like all empires the British suppressed political meetings but they observed a hands-off policy with regard to religion. This provided a loophole which nationalists like Tilak exploited to the full for their own purposes, and the revival of the Ganapati festival is an outstanding example.

Tilak would seem to have had two general aims in view in trying to establish this as a national festival. Victor Barnouw, writing in the *American Anthropologist Journal* of February 1954 says, "First of all, he (Tilak) thought that a public ten-day festival would provide a good occasion for lectures and anti-British propaganda. Second, Tilak hoped that a public Ganapati festival would bring the Hindu community together *vis-à-vis* the Muslims and provide a sense of Hindu solidarity." Mr. Barnouw goes on to say that Tilak's second aim might have been the less significant of the two. Be this as it may, the building of Hindu solidarity seems to have been the immediate reason for the organization of the Ganapati festival. The Hindu-Moslem riots of 1893 in Bombay and Poona, which have already been described, gave Tilak every reason to believe that the British Government was favouring the Muslims and directly or indirectly encouraging them to take up an aggressive attitude. He rightly argued, therefore, that the Hindus must take a firm stand against Muslim provocation, not because they were Muslims, but because they were allowing themselves to be used as agents of foreign rulers. His stand was against the power behind the Muslims rather than against the Muslim community itself.

Until this time Hindus had always taken part in the annual Muslim festival of Moharram. Local Muslim organizations used to take a collection every year to pay for the public entertainments—singing and dancing, and a procession—to which the Hindus liberally contributed. Almost all Hindu communities used to join in the celebrations. But after the riots Tilak urged the Hindus not to contribute to or take part in these Moharram festivities. Instead, they should organize their own celebrations on similar lines around the Ganesh idol. The following year the number of community Ganapatis grew, and in 1896 there were more than fifty centres in Poona itself celebrating the festival on public lines. There was no doubt that the movement had become a tremendous success. Tilak wrote

articles in *Kesari* calling on the intellectuals of India to take part in the festival, and not to stand aside and scoff as some members of the "social reform" movement had been doing. He exhorted them to seize the opportunity to go out among the people and spread the message of "Swaraj".

One interesting question is often asked: Why did Tilak select the Ganesh festival in preference to so many other possible festivals in the Hindu calendar? There are many likely answers, and each of them may have had a share in his decision. The climax of this festival is the immersion of the god in the local river or pond, which resembles the immersion of the tabuts (decorative structures representing the tombs at Kerbela) which takes place at the end of the Muslim festival of Moharram, and may easily have been modelled on it. The report of the Sedition Committee (1918–19) suggested that the Hindu procession and immersion of Ganapati, which are such a close parallel to the Muslim ceremony, were intended by Tilak as a deliberate insult to the Muslims. But it should also be observed that many Hindu festivals, such as those of Durga and Sarasvati, end in a similar way with a procession and immersion.

Having successfully launched the Ganapati festival, which was mainly directed to revive the religious enthusiasm of the Hindu community, Tilak turned his attention to organising the enthusiasm of the people in secular matters. Like Thomas Carlyle and Emerson, he believed that the "heroes" of the world are the creators of history. It is their great work which inspires the ordinary man, gives him ideals to aim at, and raises his moral stature. He believed that a community can only continue to live and prosper if it can produce an unbroken chain of great men to serve and inspire it. When it no longer throws up great men, the community declines and dies. This reasoning led him to the conclusion that the people must be given a hero to worship who would help them to rediscover their self-esteem and self-respect, without which they could never hope to make the supreme effort in self-sacrifice for their political liberation.

Fortunately, he found in Shivaji, the founder of the Mahratta Empire, a hero who was revered and worshipped all over Maharashtra. To the millions he was the ideal man, the ideal king, valiant in war and wise in council; pure, just and compassionate. Villagers

sang his praises in traditional ballads, and poets wrote new songs every year to commemorate his great achievements. Tilak decided to organize an annual festival round the personality of the hero Shivaji and thus create a new movement to gather into a single stream the forces of nationalism and patriotism. Shivaji was not a hero of the Brahmin community only; he was claimed as their own by the vast non-Brahmin populace of Maharashtra. Shrewdly, Tilak calculated that Shivaji would be an acceptable figure to Brahmin and non-Brahmin alike, and the agitation for Swaraj would reach the masses more quickly than by any other means. The Mahratta hero was hailed as the symbol and embodiment of Hindu courage, sacrifice and chivalry. In Maharashtra, Shivaji and Swarjya are the two sides of the coin. By founding the Shivaji festival Tilak reached the hearts of the people and roused the patriotic instinct of the Mahratta youth.

In 1895 he organized a public meeting in Poona and resolved to raise a Memorial Fund to rebuild Shivaji's Tomb at Raigarh, which was then in a very dilapidated condition. The movement was a great success. Thousands of descendants of Shivaji's generals and soldiers attended the festival at Raigarh, where Tilak ceremoniously received them and honoured them as they would have been in the olden days. Thrilling memories of their forefathers' great exploits were revived. And, by contrast with the glorious past, everyone at the festival was made sharply aware of the degrading conditions under which they were living.

The Shivaji festival, like its predecessor the Ganesh festival, soon became an annual event. Even in Bengal, a province which was supposed to have suffered at the hands of the Mahrattas, the people responded very enthusiastically and Calcutta celebrated it with as much enthusiasm as Poona. To a Bengali audience Tilak said in 1907: "Our political aspirations need all the strength which the worship of a Swadeshi (native) hero is likely to inspire in our minds. For this purpose, what greater hero than Shivaji could be found in Indian history. He was born at a time when the whole nation required relief from misrule; and by his self-sacrifice, courage and heroic deeds he proved to the world that India was not a country forsaken by Providence. It is true that the Mahommedans and the Hindus were then divided; and Shivaji, who respected the religious scruples of the Mahommedans, had to fight against the Moghul rule

that had become unbearable to the people." Tilak exhorted his Mahommedan listeners to pay no attention to the Anglo-Indian writers who were making a bogey of the Shivaji festival and telling the people that the Mahratta hero was anti-Mahommedan. He asked them to accept Shivaji as one who "in his own days took a bold stand against the tyranny of his time". Shivaji's fight, Tilak suggested, was not against the Moghuls because they were Mahommedans but because they were oppressive, tyrannical and despotic rulers.

Tilak did not expect the people to copy every incident in Shivaji's life, as the times had radically changed. It was the spirit which actuated Shivaji in his exploits, not the exploits themselves, that was held up as a model and an example to the rising generation. Tilak was well aware that the British Press in India was trying to make mischief by labelling the festival as a deliberate attempt on his part to stir up the Hindus against the Muslims. He warned his Muslim countrymen not to fall into the Anglo-Indian trap. "The Shivaji festival," he declared, "is not celebrated to alienate or even to irritate the Mahommedans. Times have changed and the Mahommedans and the Hindus are in the same boat as far as the present political condition of the people is concerned." The people understood and followed him implicitly. The political movement of the towns had begun to reach the villages.

It is important to note that some Muslims, at least in the beginning of the festival, joined in the celebrations together with the Hindus, which gives the direct lie to men like Sir Valentine Chirol, who asserted that Tilak had inaugurated the Shivaji cult as an anti-Muslim movement.

By 1906 this festival had travelled far beyond the country of the Mahrattas. It was being regularly celebrated in Benares, Calcutta, Karachi and Madras, so embracing the four corners of the country. Tilak's warm sympathy for Bengal over the partition of the Province, his support for the political programme which the Bengalis had proposed to make their protests effective, and his vast popularity as a militant leader were drawing the Bengali leaders to him with growing affection and confidence. Millions had heard his name; now they wanted to see him in person.

In response to an invitation from the organizers of the Shivaj

festival committee Tilak went to Calcutta and delivered a series of lectures on the life and mission of the Mahratta hero. The European community was quite unable to understand how a Mahratta leader like Tilak could be so enthusiastically received and heard with such rapt attention on his favourite theme of Shivaji, by Bengali audiences, sometimes numbering tens of thousands.

In the late eighteenth century Raghuji Bhonsle of Nagpur had actually invaded Bengal, since when the people of the province came to dread the very name Mahratta. The Bengali mothers used to frighten their children by invoking the "borgi", meaning the "Mahratta freebooter". Shivaji was the bogey-man of Bengal, yet the magic of Tilak's name, and his superbly logical way of explaining the life work of Shivaji, changed the old prejudice into warm affection and respect for the Mahratta hero. Bengalis accepted Shivaji as their own national hero and drew new inspiration from him. Ever since those days bands of sympathy and affection have bound together Maharashtra in the West and Bengal in the East—a unique phenomenon in Indian politics. These two provinces stuck together throughout the national struggle from 1905 to 1947 and a unity of purpose and ideals was established which led to a union of minds. Bengal and Maharashtra, after this Calcutta visit of Tilak, began to think and act alike, whether it was over the programme of the New Party, the terrorist movement of secret societies, or organized opposition to Mahatma Gandhi's programme of non-co-operation. As the Sedition Committee said in its report, "Any cult started in Maharashtra has its echoes at once in Bengal".

These festivals were the scene of Tilak's earlier work and popularity. They cover the period of his political career from 1893 to 1905, a time during which he is seen to be directing all his energies to re-awakening in the people of Maharashtra a sense of their past greatness and so preparing them for a sustained fight against British rule.

The Congress was fulfilling the function of making the people politically conscious; but its message could only reach the fringe of the educated few. And the Congress leadership itself had not yet fully realized the importance of developing the organization into a mass movement. Some of the arm-chair politicians were frankly contemptuous of any contact with the masses, and called Tilak "a

leader of oilmen and betel-nut sellers", meaning the common man of India, the worker and the peasant. But in the Ganapati and Shivaji festivals Tilak could claim to have brought the rich and the poor together in a common struggle to reach the goal of Indian liberation.

8

FAMINE, PLAGUE, AND THE RAND MURDER

Law is mighty, necessity is mightier.
GOETHE

Tilak's political career began in earnest with two disasters which overtook India in the years 1896 and 1897: a terrible famine and an outbreak of the dreaded bubonic plague. His actions in both stamped him as a leader of tremendous resourcefulness and strength of character, and also brought him into sharp conflict with the Government.

Famine was nothing new in India; the failure of the monsoon rains in any year inevitably meant a meagre harvest, with widespread distress and food scarcity. Unnoticed and uncared for, peasants and farm workers suffered the pangs of hunger in silence and, when the pangs became unbearable, died by the roadside. Official reports admit that during the period of twenty-five years from 1876 to 1900, eighteen famines occurred in India, including the four most terrible ever known there, and that "during this period, 19,000,000 lives were lost from famine and famine diseases".

A few of the British officials expressed themselves as "very sorry" for the dying Indians; some of them wrote confidential memoranda home to England and "deplored the poverty of the people". Many others attributed the great number of deaths to the weak stamina of the peasants or to fever, which in the words of a medical authority "is a euphemism for insufficient food, scanty clothing and unfit dwellings". No doubt this sympathy on the part of the officials was genuine, but it did not express itself in action to help the people. It neither fed the hungry mouths nor saved the lives of the starving peasants.

Something positive had to be done to stop the ravages of famine,

but who could do it? Tilak, unlike other leaders, did not remain content with mildly deploring the "calamity" and appealing to the Government. He went into action. As he had anticipated, hungry crowds from the countryside converged on the big towns and cities, in search of food and work. Poona, Panwel, Junnar, Kalyan, Nasik, Ahmednagar, Sholapur and other towns in the Presidency of Bombay became vast encampments of destitute people from the villages. They were desperate for food and in some places they looted provision shops. Tilak sensed a great social danger in this situation and promptly created a relief organization of his own. His volunteers went to the villages and offered the hungry people food on the spot, which greatly lessened pressure on the towns. He also induced many grain merchants and wealthy bankers in Poona and Sholapur to subscribe generously both in corn and money and organized free meals in community kitchens. He went from place to place supervising the working of the vast relief organization which his inspiring personality and indefatigable energy had brought into being.

Then he went after the Government to remind them that it was "their responsibility to save the people's lives and that they will neglect it at their own peril" (*Kesari*, November 17th, 1896). In an earlier article he plainly warned the authorities that the peasants might rebel against them if steps were not taken at once to ease their distress and reminded the Government of the special famine relief fund which was lying untouched in the Indian Treasury. He published eye-witness stories from the famine-stricken villages, and wrote, "People are selling their cattle for the price of grass, and the grass is being sold almost at the price of gold. Thousands are leaving their villages to go to the towns and those who remain behind will also have to leave soon. . . . Wherever there is famine it is the duty of the ruler to save the lives of his subjects. In the form of the Famine Insurance Fund the Government holds a large amount of the peoples' money. . . . When their own money is with the Government why should they die of hunger?" Having thus sharply reminded the authorities of their responsibility, he turned to the people and pointed out to them that it was not enough to have a Famine Insurance Fund and a Famine Relief Code; they must be used. Their whole purpose was that they should be put into operation in times of emergency. A government of foreigners was apt to sleep

over such measures, he said, but it was up to the people to see that they got the full benefit of the provisions in the Famine Relief Code and the other measures which the Government itself had passed into law. The people must compel the authorities to carry out their responsibilities and put these provisions into practice.

For months the *Kesari* devoted its columns to the question of famine; it taught the people to claim their rights, it exposed the high-handed behaviour of the officials, it exhorted the leaders to stand by the ignorant and helpless peasants and to organize relief. He asked the people to study the provisions of the Famine Relief Code; in particular the village leaders should study them and bring them to the notice of the villagers. "If the conditions as laid down in the Famine Code prevail in any district," he advised the peasants, "then, obviously, there is no need for the peasants to pay the land tax, at least not for this year." In another issue he wrote, "It has come to our knowledge that in spite of the famine conditions prevailing in their districts certain officials are using force to levy the land tax. We warn them that their action is wrong and illegal. They must remember that it is clearly stated in the Famine Code that "the peasants cattle and land must not be auctioned to collect the government dues".

Under the auspices of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha[1] which had come under his control, Tilak sent out volunteers to collect detailed information from the rural areas, and printed copies of a leaflet explaining in Marathi the provisions of the Famine Relief Code. These were distributed free all over Maharashtra.

Volunteers held meetings to explain to the villagers that they must organize themselves to secure redress from the Government.

[1] The Sarvajanik Sabha (The People's Association) was founded in 1870 by prominent citizens of Poona to act as a sort of mediator between the Indian people and the British Government in India. The Sabha sponsored petitions on public grievances, made representations to the authorities and also tried to inform the people of the Government's point of view. For many years it was controlled by Moderate leaders like Mr. Justice Ranade and Professor Gokhale. In 1896 the latter resigned and severed his connection with the Association as Tilak and his party were voted into power—a development disliked by the bureaucracy. In the following year, 1897, the Government of Bombay passed a special resolution and announced its decision to withdraw recognition of the Sabha. Tilak was informed that the Government would no longer entertain any petition or representation as one of his workers was found to be distributing unauthorised literature among the famine-stricken areas.

The burden of their message was that the Government must be made to act and fulfil the conditions of the Famine Relief Code.

An incident at a meeting addressed by Professor Sathe, one of Tilak's helpers, at Chikhalwade in Thana District, gave Tilak the theme of one of his fiercest articles. While the professor was addressing a huge meeting of peasants, the Assistant Collector for the district suddenly appeared on the scene with a strong posse of armed policemen, who had orders to shoot at the first sign of disturbance; this was nothing less than an act of open intimidation and terrorization. But Professor Sathe refused to be cowed. He told his audience they must not let the presence of the armed police frighten them, for "The more you are terrorized, the more you will be suppressed."

The following week Tilak came out with a scorching article entitled "Monster Meeting of Ryots Within Close Range of Loaded Guns". He poured out his pent-up indignation at the high-handed attitude of the officials and declared, "It seems that the Government officers are out to terrorize the people in order to squeeze out the land revenue from the helpless peasants. People must realize that this is against the wishes of Her Majesty and against the law. The people must resolve therefore to be prepared to die rather than give in, and local leaders must see to it that this resolution is carried out. We must also remember that sometimes the legal battle may go against us, but that must not deter anybody from fighting". Tilak warned the Indian members of the Civil Service not to forget that they were Indians first and Civil Servants afterwards; that they must not put in false reports to please their British superiors, and he told the people "not to hesitate to expose such toadying officials". He ended with these words: "If you fail to get what is due to you from the Government you do not deserve to live." Here, the people realized, was a champion who would fight their cause to the end.

Petitions from village committees all over the Province began to pour into the offices of the District Collectors and Commissioners giving them first-hand information from the people's side about the widespread distress and the relief which they were looking for. Almost all the petitioners pointed out to the Government that as the yield of the crops that year was hardly four annas in a rupee (about twenty-five per cent), they would not be in a position to pay the land tax. On top of this, they quoted cases of official high-handedness and intimidation; this was indeed a departure from the usual

docile behaviour of the rural population. The very fact that they dared to complain was in itself a sign that Tilak's preaching was having its effect. This was a development which the alien Government of India had no wish to see go any further. It had to be checked, so in December the Government decided to prosecute some of Tilak's band of supporters.

One of these was Professor Sathe, who had defied the presence of the armed police at Chikhalwade and addressed the meeting in spite of them. When the news of Sathe's prosecution reached Tilak in Calcutta, where he had gone to attend the Congress Session, he at once returned to Poona and arranged for Sathe's defence. The case roused tremendous interest, and on the day it was to be heard thousands of peasants gathered round the court. This was the first case where a public worker was prosecuted for explaining to the people their rights and privileges under the Famine Relief Act. The night before the hearing of the case Tilak addressed a public meeting and declared, "If Professor Sathe is to be prosecuted for enlightening the people on their legal rights, then they must prosecute me, and for that matter many times, because I have been doing exactly that, day in and day out". This bold stand taken by Tilak made a great impression and put new heart into his followers. They were heartened further by the acquittal of Sathe.

Tilak's experience in the Famine of 1896 brought home to him two basic facts in the life of the people—facts which were the two sides of the same problem. Wherever he and his volunteers went they found the people utterly weak, easily cowed by a show of authority and living in dread of officials. The peasant had lost all fight, all will to assert his rights, and with it, his pride and self-respect. He was illiterate and ignorant, and this made him an easy prey for the British officials and their Indian subordinates. To counter this defeatist psychology Tilak toured the famine-stricken areas in person, talked to the peasants and held discussions with them.

Kesari's services in this period helped enormously in bringing relief and comfort to the famine-stricken families. The first-hand, on-the-spot information collected by trustworthy volunteers and his own experiences during his constant visits to the villages proved a great lesson to Tilak. Never before had he seen so much misery, destitution, death and, above all, such utter helplessness. Thousands of the destitute roamed the country in search of food; thousands

more went into the jungles and tried to keep themselves alive on grass and wild berries; many more died by the roadsides.

This was one side of the problem and a desperate picture it was. But on the other side—how to organize and unite the people so that such conditions could be swept away—there was hope. Tilak found that the people were ready to trust and follow him. He knew his writings were creating a new spirit of resistance which would attack the evils which were bound to come from administration by an alien government. He knew that he was running tremendous risks in urging the people to develop and organize this spirit, for it could easily lead to popular excesses. However, he was not prepared to damp the people's enthusiasm even when they seemed to go beyond the legal limits which he had set for his own action. He was convinced that the spirit of resistance which was taking root in the people through his various movements and his own personal example would in time develop into a nation-wide force out of which India's independence would emerge.

In a sense, it can be said that the famine of 1896 largely decided the ultimate course of Tilak's career. From then on we see him not only as a leader in the fight for national independence but also as the special champion of the peasant, whose emancipation became the purpose and passion of his life. He declared, "The country's emancipation can only be achieved by removing the clouds of lethargy and indifference which have been hanging over the peasant, who is the soul of India. We must remove these clouds, and for that we must completely identify ourselves with the peasant—we must feel that he is ours and we are his."

With this faith burning in him, Tilak worked for the famine-stricken peasants with untiring energy, and the peasants on their part gave their hearts to him and followed him faithfully. Mr. Rambhau Mandalik, one of the volunteers in the famine work, has described an incident he witnessed, which shows how great was Tilak's influence over the people. Two volunteers were being tried before the district magistrate, Mr. Brook, in the village of Pen, in the Colaba district of Bombay. Mr. Brook's tent was surrounded by thousands of peasants and the echoes of the cries of "Tilak Maharaj-ki-Jay! (Hail Tilak Maharaj)" filled the air. The police tried hard to keep the people quiet but without success. At this point Mr. Brook turned to Tilak and asked him to use his good offices to quieten the

crowd. Tilak came out of the tent, and the moment the people saw him they greeted him with one more hearty "Tilak Maharaj-ki-Jay" and then prepared themselves to listen to him in absolute silence. Mr. Brook frankly admitted later that Tilak was the unquestioned leader and mouthpiece of the peasants.[1]

What he had learned in the famine agitation proved useful when Tilak came to deal with another disaster which befell India early in 1897. This was the sudden outbreak of bubonic plague, a disease previously unknown in India. It started in Bombay in October 1896, and spread to Poona in the following year. Four hundred died in less than four weeks, an indication of how rapidly this deadly disease spread. The health officers of the Bombay municipality were as terrified as the public at this sudden outbreak, for they were completely in the dark about its origin and treatment. It was vaguely suspected that the disease was brought to Bombay by some foreign ship, but by which ship, no one knew. The victim's first symptom was usually a high temperature, and then after a day or two a glandular growth of the size of a small lemon would develop, either under the armpit or in the groin. Death came only after agonies of pain. The doctors of the day could render very little help; in backward areas patients were given strong doses of iodine; others drank paraffin as a sure cure, while many smeared their bodies with the juices of jungle herbs, which were supposed to protect the body from infection. This was the state of things when Poona was attacked by plague in the spring of 1897. It raged about four months, but was to recur again the next year, and there are people who still remember those twelve months as a nightmare.

Realizing that bubonic plague is a highly contagious disease, the Government was rightly anxious to root it out as best it could, and adopted measures to stop it from spreading. It appointed a special duty officer, by name Rand, a man of great energy and courage, and with a passion for ruthless efficiency, to carry out these measures. Unfortunately he was wholly lacking in the finer qualities of a good administrator, who should never fail to respect the feelings of the people for whose welfare he is working. Rand employed British soldiers to go round the city and inspect the houses where plague cases had occurred or were suspected. The British soldiers used rough and ready methods; they destroyed any property they

[1] *Reminiscences and Anecdotes about Lokamanya Tilak*, edited by S. V. Bapat.

thought contaminated by plague germs; removed men, women and children from the affected houses into segregation camps; and thoroughly disinfected those houses. In the course of their visits the soldiers, ignorant of Indian habits, showed little respect for places of worship. And what was worse—and inexcusable—they molested women and ill-treated helpless old men. Further, a number of people in perfect health were taken off to plague hospitals and quarantine or segregation camps on mere suspicion. Before long, the people of Poona began to dread the reign of terror of Rand and his search parties more than the epidemic itself. Indeed, one contemporary account says that more people died of shock from military terrorism than from the disease. Some, especially the well-to-do, fled from the city, and this only increased the panic and alarm and made the people feel more helpless than ever.

Tilak was not the man to turn his back on people in distress. He formed ward committees to help them, started hospitals and organized volunteer corps. Week after week he thundered in *Kesari* against the "inhuman" conduct of Rand's men who were let loose like "a vast engine of oppression" on the people. Side by side with this strong criticism Tilak made helpful and constructive suggestions for lessening the rigours of the plague prevention measures. He made it clear that he was not opposed to the better sanitary and hygienic arrangements of the Plague Committee; but what he could not tolerate was herding together indiscriminately in the same camp, all sorts of people—expectant and nursing mothers, for instance, were crowded together with men! Tilak suggested that all unnecessary hardships, annoyances and inconveniences could be avoided if the people could be got to co-operate and if Rand and his men were to show a little more common sense and consideration. He waited on this officer with a citizens' deputation to explain to him the growing resentment of the public at his measures, which were, to say the least, harsh and oppressive. Rand was polite enough to receive the deputation but he did not change his ways. *Kesari* then warned the authorities that popular resentment was reaching breaking-point. Indignantly the newspaper asked, "What people on earth, however docile, will continue to submit to this sort of mad terror?"

Tilak's opposition to the work of the Plague Committee was mainly directed against the methods adopted by Mr. Rand and his

soldiers. He was all for disinfecting the affected areas and segregating the plague-stricken victims. But he pleaded with the authorities to preserve the essential dignities of life and treat the Indians with decency and humanity. He also pointed out—and medical men bore out his opinion—that some of the measures put in force by the officials were worthless and could not prevent the spread of the disease. Later—in 1900—a committee appointed by the Government of India to review the working of its anti-plague machinery frankly admitted in its report that the measures adopted were totally inadequate and useless either to stop bubonic plague when it broke out in any particular area or to arrest its spread to the neighbouring districts. Thus Tilak's criticism was proved to be justified and he was vindicated on every count. Commenting on the Committee's report the late Mr. W. T. Stead of *Review of Reviews* fame wrote: "For four years the plague has been raging in India, and the Anglo-Indian, being armed with autocratic authority, has used his power ruthlessly in order to cope with the ravages. He has failed and confesses it. In the official notification of the abandonment of the measures hitherto in force to prevent the spread of the plague there is a very valuable admission which all those who hanker after autocratic power will do well to bear in mind. The Indian Government declares that the experience of four years has established it as an axiom that it is hopeless to carry out effectively any system of plague administration which runs counter to the feelings, susceptibilities and prejudices of the people."

In the meantime, a determined group of reckless young men was planning to avenge in its own way the humiliation and distress of the people of Poona. They chose Tuesday, June 22nd, the diamond jubilee of Queen Victoria's succession to the Throne, which, in Poona, as everywhere else all over the Empire, the British were celebrating with balls and champagne dinners. For them it was a day of rejoicing, for the Queen's long reign had brought the Little Island to the zenith of its power and prosperity—it was "an empire on which the sun never sets". In their exuberance they little guessed that the people of Poona—or, at least, a few of the more spirited among them—were going to show that the Queen's Throne was perhaps not as immune from harm as they thought, and that already an explosive charge was being set in place under it.

That night, as the guests at the Government House dinner-party

began to turn homeward in their splendid coaches-and-four, a volley of gunshots broke out. The hated Rand and Lieutenant Ayerst had been shot dead. Before Mrs. Rand, who was with her husband in the coach, could raise the alarm, the assassin and his accomplices had disappeared in the pitch-dark night. The people's honour was avenged. And as he made his escape, the assassin may well have reflected that now, at least, no one could say that the citizens of Poona had taken the British terror and insults lying down.

The news of the murders spread like wildfire. Before dawn, secret agents of the C.I.D. were combing the entire city. One of them went to Tilak early in the morning to tell what had happened during the night and, perhaps, to study his reaction. Even to him it was obvious that Tilak knew nothing about the events of the night. Later, to his friends he said, "I attended the Government House party but I did not notice anything unusual there."

The Government, however, had other ideas about Tilak; they strongly suspected that there was a conspiracy to murder Rand and that Tilak was the moving spirit behind it. His weekly outbursts in *Kesari* afforded some basis for the suspicion, for when people complained of the British soldiers' misbehaviour, he advised them to "use force in self-defence, which is legal", he said.

The authorities immediately put the city under a curfew and imposed a punitive police force on the citizens of Poona. But the price of Rs.20,000 put on the head of the murderer was sufficient before long to induce one of his acquaintances to betray him. The C.I.D. worked on this clue and arrested Damodar Chaphekar, who was put on trial, sentenced to death and duly hanged.

But when the murder took place the Government of Bombay rather lost its head. Nearly every prominent Brahman leader was under suspicion and as the most prominent among them was Tilak, he was regarded as the obvious person behind the murder. Many people, particularly the Moderate section, were so overwhelmed at this unexpected happening that they held a public meeting to condemn the assassin and deplore the "sad death of Mr. Rand", but much of the effect was lost when it leaked out that the meeting had been staged at the behest of Mr. Lamb, the District Magistrate of Poona.

Though he deplored the murder, Tilak did not attend the meeting. And, since he did not believe in the existence of a widespread conspiracy, he condemned the Government for its action in imposing the punitive police on the citizens "who were not responsible for the murder".

In two scathing articles in *Kesari* entitled, "Has the Government Lost Its Head?" and "To Rule is Not to Wreak Vengeance", he exposed the senseless and oppressive measures of the police and the vindictive attitude of the Government officials in making the citizens of Poona scapegoats for the murder. His friend and legal adviser, Dajisabib Khare, was so alarmed at the outspoken tone of these articles that he warned Tilak that they were too strong and might land him in trouble. Tilak's reply was: "I write strong language, I admit. But my heart is full of indignation at the injustice which is being perpetrated by the officials and the words which come out are the natural outburst of the feelings inside me. I am convinced that I am within the limits of the law in criticising the Government's measures, however strong may be the language I use."

Hardly four weeks had elapsed after this conversation when Tilak was arrested in Bombay on a charge of writing seditious articles. No doubt his uncompromising attitude and his championship of the people were contributory causes of his arrest, but the immediate and main inspiration came undoubtedly from the unscrupulous agitation of *The Times of India*, which influenced Lord Sandhurst, the Governor, in taking this step in order to check Tilak's growing influence and prestige among the masses. He was becoming a power, a hero worshipped by the masses, and therefore a possible danger to the British Raj, so, they thought, he must be put down.

We have referred to the story of the murder of Mr. Rand and the execution of Damodar Chaphekar, very briefly, because it was really a side issue, being only indirectly connected with the main theme. If the Bombay Government had not tried to connect Tilak directly or indirectly with the Rand murder, there would have been no occasion to mention it at all. To all appearances, the prosecution of Tilak was for his alleged seditious writings and Chaphekar's trial was for murder. So on the surface the two cases appear to be quite separate and unconnected incidents. All attempts to establish any

connection between Tilak and the murder failed, as Damodar Chaphekar stuck to his assertion that his act was the result of his own burning desire to avenge the indignities heaped upon the citizens of Poona.

9

FIRST SEDITION TRIAL

By pains men come to greater pains; and by indignities men come to dignities.

SIR FRANCIS BACON

His work during the famine and plague had given a solid foundation to Tilak's popularity and leadership. He was a rising star in politics whose activities had begun to catch the imagination of the people and his appeal to their self-respect and patriotism was making a strong impression, and especially on the educated classes of Maharashtra. All this profoundly disturbed the British bureaucracy. The officials knew that the people were poor and half-starved; that they were dying of plague and cholera; and that malaria was taking a heavy toll every year. But their knowledge of these dreadful conditions was largely derived from the paper reports which they received from subordinate officers in the villages. And indeed what other means had they of knowing the condition of Indians? Very few of the British members of the Indian Civil Service took pains to learn the language of the people who were in their charge and as a result were unable to have free intercourse with them. Moreover, in London, before they left for India, they were officially advised not to fraternize with the natives.

It is not surprising then, that the average British administrator failed at first to realize and appreciate the extent and depth of Tilak's work and his influence over the people. He sincerely believed that it was God's will that the Indians should be under beneficent British rule and it should therefore be accepted without question or complaint. As this was the psychology of the average Britisher in India at the end of the last century, he could not understand a man like Tilak who dared to denounce and condemn the bureaucracy's indifference to the public interest.

It is true that Tilak was championing the cause of the distressed and discontented people, but he was not the creator of that distress. The British officials either ignored or misconstrued the simple law of cause and effect by fixing the blame for the people's resentment and anger on Tilak; they forgot the Government's treatment of the citizens of Poona, who had pleaded and petitioned to the authorities, offered their co-operation, and waited on the plague officer in deputations; but nothing could stop nor lessen the rigours of the search parties. Rand's murder was the people's reaction to the indignities and injustices they were suffering; the worm was turning at last. In reality it was no more than a local incident, but the bureaucracy refused this simple explanation of the crime; they saw in the murder a vast conspiracy on the part of the Poona Brahmans, whose leader they claimed was Tilak. The Anglo-Indian newspapers went beyond all bounds in fanning the flame of racial hatred. The *Times of India*, of Bombay, took the lead in abusing the Brahmans, and the European community, following its cue, lost its balance completely. The exclusive Byculla and Poona clubs, strongholds of the Anglo-Indian in Bombay and Poona had, at that time, no other topic of conversation but "this ghastly murder". The European members refused to talk to their Indian friends, for, to them, all "natives" were tarred with the same brush. The dark spirit of vengeance was in the air. The funeral of Rand, who was by now raised to the status of a martyr, took place in this atmosphere of insane excitement and hatred of the "natives". The entire white population of Poona, reinforced by contingents from Bombay, Deolali, Nasik and other places, followed the hearse which was profusely covered with flowers and wreaths. Some Indians, believing in the ancient Sanskrit saying "Enmity ends at death" (*De mortuis nil nini bonum*), went as well, to honour the dead. But the Anglo-Indians were not slow to show their resentment. Indian notabilities like Sir Cowasji Jehangir, a Baronet and Sheriff of Bombay, and Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar, an orientalist of international repute, were insulted and refused admission to the cemetery. Even a Parsee lady who had gone out of sympathy to put a wreath on the coffin was refused admission. Such was the intense feeling the murder had excited among the European populations of Bombay and Poona.

Tilak sensed personal danger in this episode. He said to his

friends, "The Anglo-Indians have thrown off their usual dignity and have turned to the law of the jungle. I am afraid some of us must be prepared to be sacrificed on the altar of their wrath. I expect they will lock me up soon." This assessment of the situation was near the truth, but he carried on his work as editor in complete disregard of possible consequences.

Tilak hit back vigorously at the Anglo-Indian newspapers, and wrote in *Kesari* a series of articles every one of which has become a classic in Indian journalism. The articles are spirited, inspiring and also well-reasoned and temperate. Tilak's main points were these: "English editors have begun to rave in a fit of anger. They forget that it was the Brahman leaders who helped the Plague Committee to such an extent that people suspected many of them of inviting it to Poona. And yet they have become the target of the Government's wrath. The Anglo-Indian community is at present exceedingly prejudiced and is in a fit of frenzy. It is not in a mood to listen to reason. It is a great pity that one man's thoughtless action should make the Anglo-Indians forget the endless forbearance the citizens of Poona had shown in the most trying days. . . . In our view Indian newspapermen have done their duty admirably in this crisis and if anybody is to be blamed it is the Government itself because it turned a deaf ear to the genuine complaints of the public. All this talk of branding Indian newspapermen as seditious is nothing but an attempt to evade responsibility and to put the blame on others." In short, while the Government officials were trying to hold responsible patriotic editors to blame for the crime of Rand's murder, Tilak was fearlessly asserting that "such crimes are natural consequences of the oppressive measures adopted by Government officials and so the ultimate responsibility for them must be placed at the door of the Government". He continued, "To create or lead peaceful opposition to foreign rule and to rouse a spirit of resistance is not sedition; true sedition is to incite people to armed rebellion in order to secure independence or the redress of a wrong. If anybody follows the line of direct incitement to violence, then it is sedition and it is the duty of the Government to punish such people. But to inflict punishment indiscriminately on the guilty and the innocent alike is certainly atrocious. If the Government abides by the law and keeps its head, then people will also remain peaceful. The responsibility of avoiding an armed revolution is on the public

leaders; so also is it on the Government officials, but if the latter do not do their duty and the people take to violence, it is sheer injustice to hold the leaders responsible for the violence, because they preach patriotism, devotion to religion and resistance to injustice, which is not incitement. To work against the British is included among the crimes listed in the category of sedition. This means that any article which is likely to lead to a revolution or rebellion can come under the Sedition Section (of the Indian Penal Code). At the same time the explanation which is appended to this Section states, that to point out the mistakes and injustices of the administration is not sedition, and therefore we see no reason to desist from strongly criticizing any Government action."

This series of articles was perhaps the last straw. The Anglo-Indian Press loudly demanded his prosecution for sedition. The most innocent of Tilak's observations were torn out of their contexts and twisted to suggest that he was preaching sedition and murder. It was argued that on May 11th Tilak had declared the "futility of mere clamour" against official high-handedness. And then on June 12th he had justified the murder of Afzal Khan by Shivaji and declared that the mlenchas (foreigners) had not been given a copper-plate (indicating permanency) to rule over India. In this way Tilak was supposed to have prepared the ground for the murder of Rand.

It must be agreed that Tilak, by adopting a fearless attitude, was running the risk of being prosecuted. He wanted his people to rid themselves of the fear of the British which had reduced them to helplessness. He knew that an ounce of practice was worth a ton of preaching; when he decided to stand up to the mighty British and challenge them, he hoped to inspire the fallen people of India with courage and determination, the two qualities which had forsaken the Indians of his generation. To his friends he once said, "Doctors must not be afraid of any disease. If they show signs of fear the ordinary people become more frightened. How can a diver work if he is afraid of water? The same is true of journalists who fight for the people's rights. They must not be afraid of going to gaol, but regard it as vocational risk, which they must be prepared to accept without hesitation."

Following his series of articles in *Kesari*, the vendetta against Tilak pursued by the Anglo-Indian Press of Bombay became even more

bitter, with the aim of forcing the hand of the Governor who, as Sir Sankaran Nair observed in his presidential address to the Congress of that year, "would never have sanctioned Tilak's arrest if he had remained a free agent". The Governor of Bombay referred to was the gentle-mannered Lord Sandhurst.

At the time of Rand's murder the *Times of India* was publishing a series of extracts from Tilak's writings in *Kesari*. With mock modesty the newspaper prefaced its attack by saying that it was not its place "to establish a direct connection between this wild teaching and that deplorable event (Rand's murder)"; however, "the atmosphere which such teaching must have created is precisely the atmosphere in which violence to individuals, hatred of government and widespread contempt for law and authority, would necessarily grow as in a forcing house". The newspaper ignored Tilak's outspoken criticism of the leaders in Poona and his valuable work, at great personal risk, for the plague-stricken people. He had taken his own countrymen severely to task, especially those who posed as leaders and who had "caught the first available train to leave the city and save themselves from the danger of the plague and the excesses of soldiers". In this same article he had declared the "futility of mere clamour against the high-handedness and insolence of the Plague Committee, from a safe distance", and asked them "to stay put and help the people". He had a right to criticize the weak-kneed behaviour of the so-called leaders; he himself had stuck to his post, organized ward committees and established a hospital. He went to see the poor sick and comforted them. Some British members of the I.C.S. expressed their appreciation of Tilak's work during the plague but the *Times of India* preferred to ignore it. The newspaper discovered material of the most explosive sort in this article and wrote: "Though we do not offer any suggestions as to the view that a jury might be persuaded to take of the Hon. Mr. Tilak's discourse on the 'futility of mere clamour' against Mr. Rand and his assistants, still someone with a pistol in his hand seems to have been in hearty agreement with the Hon. Member's distrust of the efficacy of 'mere clamour'."

This article was undoubtedly a deliberate distortion of what Tilak wrote in *Kesari*. His reference to the inefficiency of "mere clamour" was not directed at any hot-heads in order to incite them to rash actions such as the murdering of Rand; it was an indignant

protest against a section of the Poona leaders who indulged in strong language but who were not prepared to face up to physical danger by staying in the town and giving practical assistance to the people. The leader-writer of the *Times of India* was well aware of the real import of Tilak's "mere clamour" but his aim was, by twisting the original meaning of the Indian leader's writing, to set the minds of the European members of the jury against the accused. This it was well calculated to do, for the article appeared while Tilak was on bail and just before his case came before the High Court. It was, in other words, a clear case of contempt of court, since it was on a subject which was *sub judice*. The article was brought to the notice of the High Court but no effective action was taken. The editor was warned; but a mere warning after the event, when his aim of mischief-making had been achieved, was meaningless.

Tilak did what he could to restate in clearer terms the meaning and purpose of the original article which had been so flagrantly distorted. In fairness to Tilak the *Times of India* was in duty bound to publish this explanation, but it failed to do so. This was typical of the ethical standards most of the Anglo-Indian editors adopted in dealing with the "natives".

However, there is reason to believe that the Governor of Bombay, Lord Sandhurst, was at first not altogether in favour of Tilak's prosecution. Not only did he hesitate to order the prosecution, but he actually sanctioned Tilak's election to the Legislative Council for the second time. But the clamour in the British-owned newspapers for Tilak's arrest became more and more violent. According to one report the European community of Bombay threatened to ostracize the Governor socially if he persisted in his "policy of weakness". Lord Sandhurst must have recalled the treatment meted out a few years before to the Liberal Viceroy, Lord Ripon, when he brought in a Bill, known as the Ilbert Bill, to allow Indian magistrates to try English criminals. The Europeans in India then raised such an uproar against the Bill (even threatening to kidnap the Viceroy and send him to England if he persisted with it) that in the end it had to be dropped. With Ripon's fate to remind him of his "duty", Lord Sandhurst at last bowed before the storm and sanctioned Tilak's arrest and prosecution.

The diligent and not too scrupulous C.I.D. of Bombay tried hard

to find some basis, however slender, on which to establish a connection between Tilak and Rand's murder but they were unable to do so. Not to be beaten, the Government prosecutor hunted out extracts from Tilak's writings and speeches and prosecuted him on a charge of publishing two seditious articles, one an allegorical poem signed with the pseudonym "Bhawani Tarwar", and the other a report published in *Kesari* of Tilak's speech defending the killing of Afzal Khan by Shivaji.

The trial based on this rather flimsy foundation began in the High Court of Bombay on September 8th, 1897, before Mr. Justice Strachey and a special jury of nine—six Europeans and three Indians—and lasted six days.

In the poem, Shivaji, the great Mahratta prince, bewailed the fate of his subjects, who had risen to power and glory under him but had now sunk to the depths of degeneration and degradation. The poem aimed at contrasting the past with the present in a way striking enough to bring its lesson home to its readers. What the prosecution thought so objectionable in these verses was the reference to the British administration of justice, and—among many other evils—to outrages by soldiers on Indian women in railway carriages and to the draining of wealth from the country. But they were all images used by a dead hero to show the people by means of a comparison what the state of things used to be when he ruled over them, and what it was now.

Political agitation in India was still in its infancy in 1897. The Indian National Congress was hardly twelve years old and its leaders were mild politicians who had served the British Government loyally in high positions (or who aspired to do so). Their fundamental creed was loyalty to the British Throne. Not unnaturally, therefore, the word "sedition" sent shivers down their spines. They were astounded to read in their morning newspapers that Tilak had been arrested and was to be prosecuted on a charge of sedition, and their first reaction was to dissociate themselves from this firebrand. They did not go to the absurd lengths of condemning him, but the fact that Tilak could not secure legal advice and assistance from the leaders of the Bombay Bar was a clear indication that these men (who were also the so-called leaders in public affairs) had decided to wash their hands of Tilak and his "sedition". But the ordinary people of India knew better; spontaneously, a public fund for his

defence was started and, according to the confidential report made to the Government of Bombay, a total of Rs.40,000 was collected.

The most significant and valuable help came from Calcutta. The Bengali leaders, like W. C. Bannerjee, who presided over the first Session of the Congress, Motilal Ghosh, the founder and editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, and the great poet Rabindranath Tagore, formed a committee which collected Rs.16,768. 8 annas. Most of the donors to this fund "preferred to remain unknown", and the first entry in the list of subscribers is, "By cash received from XYZ . . . Rs.500." Calcutta sent not only money but two renowned barristers to defend Tilak; Mr. Pugh and Mr. Garth, assisted by an Indian barrister, Mr. J. Chaudhuri.

In his defence Tilak's counsel, Mr. Pugh, maintained that the article about Afzal Khan was no more than a discussion of the ethics of Shivaji's act in killing the Khan. "The ordinary laws which bind society are meant for common men and women. Great men like Shivaji and Cromwell live on a higher plane and act selflessly for the good of the common man, and, therefore, they must be considered above the ordinary principles of morality; they cannot be judged by ordinary standards," was Tilak's contention.

But the Judge twisted every word of the accused in summing up the case to the jury. Tilak had written: "If thieves enter our houses and we have not sufficient strength in our wrists to drive them out, we should, without hesitation, shut them up and burn them alive." Mr. Justice Strachey in his summing-up said, "According to the Crown the suggestion is that amongst the means to be adopted, and which are justified by the great end in view, is political assassination or the destruction of your enemies in any way you think fit; that supposing there are people in authority, thieves who enter your house, evilly-disposed persons who occupy your possessions, and you cannot turn them out, you are, without hesitation, to shut them up, and burn them alive. If foreigners are in possession of the country, and you cannot drive them out of it, destroy them in it. . . . The sentence on the face of it, is in the present tense and justifies a particular course of action in the circumstances stated."

The same line of argument was adopted by the Judge in explaining to the jury the meaning of the poem. In short he directed the jury

to find the accused guilty; however, he agreed with the prosecution that there was no case to prove any connection between Tilak's plague articles and the murder of Rand and yet he left a strong impression in this matter. Throughout his address he stressed one point—that the intention of the accused in writing his articles was to incite hatred and enmity against the Government established by law. The Judge not only ignored the evidence brought before the Court by Tilak but gave a distorted interpretation of Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code. He defined "disaffection" as "simply want of affection" which he further explained as "ill-will, dislike and enmity". The jury charged with such a one-sided address returned a verdict of guilty which was, however, disappointing to the Judge as it was not unanimous—the six Europeans voted "guilty" and the three Indians "not guilty". This was indeed a significant division; the Europeans did not understand the Marathi language in which the original articles were written, but the three Indians knew it and understood its force and idiom; they were surely in a better position to understand just what Tilak meant than their European colleagues. But the proceedings were such a travesty of British justice and trial by jury that Mr. Strachey accepted the majority verdict and sentenced Tilak to eighteen months' hard labour.

Referring to this case, Sir John Simon, later Lord Simon, one of the most distinguished legal talents in England, said in 1919 that the learned Judge's definition of "disaffection" was on a par with describing "disease" as "the absence of ease". Could absurdity go further than that? But the man who was sitting in judgment on Tilak was not really concerned with the rights and wrongs of the case; he was more concerned with whether Tilak's writings had shaken the foundation of British rule. One wonders whether Strachey was a frightened man. Perhaps he had visions of the Empire crashing in ruins and, with it, Britain's world supremacy. All hands to the pump, he must have thought, no time for justice now!

The people and the leaders of the older generation had been lulled into the belief that the British Raj stood for justice and fair play, but Tilak's trial proved beyond doubt (as nothing before had ever so conclusively proved) its real character. This fact, and the hypocrisy of the apologists of British rule in India,

were the very points the hero of the trial wished to prove to the world.

The Government, no less than the people, attached great importance to Tilak's case and went so far as to engage special observers to study public reactions. The C.I.D. report begins by stating, "The arrest caused considerable stir *throughout India.* No case has interested the people of this country so much for years and years back and the sympathy shown towards him took the practical form of a collection of Rs.40,000 for his defence, which came in from all over India". After describing the public's reactions to the trial, the report sums up native opinion in the following words: "Mr. Tilak, though legally convicted, has been morally acquitted and has risen ten times higher in public estimation by the bold stand he took during the trial. It was an ennobling sight, when he was standing at the Bar and reiterating his innocence in spite of the verdict of the jury. A pure conscience and a fixed resolution seemed to endow the man at the time with iron nerves, and the people at once recognized in him a hero standing in defence of a national cause."

The first sedition trial of Tilak ushered in an era of new force and vitality to the Indian political scene. It will not be out of place at this point to examine a much discussed and misunderstood facet of Tilak's career. Ever since his conviction for sedition Anglo-India branded Tilak as an anti-British politician and a bitter enemy of Britain. It is true that all his life he seemed to be fighting the British Government in India, whether it was in an adoption suit (the Tai Maharaj case), a libel suit against an English author (Chirol), or sedition trials as the present one. It is also true that once the fight was joined he never spared his enemy nor yielded his ground. This gave him the false reputation of being a "great hater" of Britain and the British. But was he so in fact? His friends have claimed, and not without justification, that he was far from being a hater of men whether they were British or Indian. Tilak himself in expounding his philosophical approach to politics has said that he hated the evil and not the evil-doer. The views of Mr. Henry Brewin on this subject are worth consideration. As an experienced and intelligent C.I.D. officer of the Government of Bombay he was detailed to keep a close watch on the movements of Tilak. This gave him many opportunities to see the Indian leader both before and

after the trial. In fact, strange as it may appear, these two men struck up an intimate friendship. Mr. Brewin had the great advantage over other British officers of being able to talk with Tilak in his native language, Marathi, and they held conversations on a variety of subjects, including philosophy, history and literature. Brewin was not particularly objective in his reports about Tilak, but he did not wilfully distort his reports of their conversations. Indeed, on occasion he did not hesitate to state his views frankly even if they went against those of his superiors. As a result of his talks with Tilak he became convinced that he was a man of upright character who would not use underhand methods of agitation. He accordingly wrote to the Government to this effect. This may partly explain Mr. Justice Strachey's avowal that there was no connection between Tilak and the Rand murder.

Mr. Brewin's views as expressed to Mr. Baba Saheb Deshpande, an Indian colleague in the Police Department, assume, therefore, a special importance. "After three hours' discussion with Mr. Tilak," he told Deshpande, "I came to the conclusion that he was essentially an admirer of English institutions and culture. Yesterday he gave me a lecture on parliamentary government and said, 'What I want to see in India is a parliament of elected Indian representatives on the model of your Parliament at Westminster.' He said, 'I know many of your people think that I hate the British, which is of course, not true. I will tell you what I hate, and you are free to report what I am now going to say. It is this: I hate the British rule in India because it is un-British; it is not based on the people's will—it is undemocratic. Could any English jury convict a man for writing articles of the kind I wrote? Place yourself in my position. Will any Englishman worth the name sit still if he finds his countrymen dying while the officials remain inactive? The Anglo-Indian newspapers have branded me as anti-British but they forget that I pay the highest tribute to the British and their character by following their example in opposing what I consider evil in the administration. Then again, as there is no parliamentary system in India, somebody has to perform the duties of the Opposition. I have constituted myself and my two newspapers as the permanent opposition of His Majesty's Government in India.'"

Such was the man who made history by going to gaol for writing seditious articles. As one modern Indian historian has said, "With

the first sedition trial of Tilak the ugly chapter of Indian surrender to foreign domination came to an end; it was consigned to limbo for all time". Tilak's deliberate defiance of the British Raj opened a new chapter in the history of India and ushered in a new age of self-reliance and sacrifice. The "meek and mild Indian" so beloved by Rudyard Kipling and the nineteenth century Anglo-Indian writers died in 1897; the "most loyal and law-abiding citizen in the world" vanished for ever and his place was taken by a new type of Indian who breathed defiance and challenged the foreign rule—an Indian vibrant with new life and dreaming new ideals.

10

LIFE IN PRISON

As Tilak's was the first important sedition case in a long line which was to stretch over fifty years, it will not be out of place to pause for a moment and see how his conviction was received by people in India and abroad. The case also had a special significance in that the British Judge had defined "disaffection" as "not so much a positive feeling of hatred towards the government established by law as simply want of affection", a definition which was likely to prove a death blow to all political agitation.

Guessing what was likely to be the outcome of such a trial, some of Tilak's best friends had advised him to apologize to the Government and so save himself the hardship of prosecution and imprisonment. Babu Motilal Ghose, a close friend of Tilak and editor of the well-known Calcutta newspaper the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, was particularly anxious that Tilak should not challenge the Government at this stage and took the initiative in writing a letter to "give brotherly advice" to him. He received a characteristic reply, for Tilak wrote: "The other side expects me to do what amounts to pleading guilty. I am not prepared to do so. My position among the people depends entirely upon my character; and if I am cowed by the prosecution—in my heart of hearts I know the case for the prosecution is the weakest that was ever placed before a jury—I think living in Maharashtra is as good as living in the Andamans. On the merits of the case I am confident of success, though I cannot in this letter and in the present state of my health give you all my reasons. I am afraid only of a jury not conversant with Marathi and not of justice. You, as well as I, know that we are incapable of nourishing any sinister feeling against British rule, and it is thus impossible for any of us to be convicted for such a charge as sedition. Such risks, however, we must take if we dabble in politics. They are

the risks of our profession, and I am prepared to face them. If you all advise it, I am prepared to go only so far as to say: 'I don't think that the articles are seditious, but if the advisers of the Government think otherwise, I am sorry for it.' But this will not satisfy the Government. Their object is to humiliate the Poona leaders, and I think they will not find in me a kutcha reed as they did in some others. Then you must remember that beyond a certain stage, we are all servants of the people. You will be betraying and disappointing them if you show a lamentable want of courage at a critical time. But above all, as an honest and honourable man, how can I plead guilty to the charge of entertaining sedition when I had none? If I am convicted, the sympathy of my countrymen will support me in my trouble."

Almost without exception the Indian newspapers condemned Mr. Justice Strachey's novel definition of sedition and the sentence he passed on Tilak. The comments of the *Indian Mirror* of Calcutta were, perhaps, the most moderate and representative of the Indian view in this matter. The newspaper said, "It seemed that the Judge and the Advocate General had changed places. . . . What with the tendencies of the times, the present temper of the European community in India, and the prejudice excited against the Mahrattas of Poona since the murders of Mr. Rand and Lt. Ayerst, the verdict was practically a foregone conclusion. . . . The case was one of the greatest importance and involved the settlement of grave issues. It was too much to expect so young and inexperienced a judge as Mr. Arthur Strachey to show himself equal to the importance of the issues before him." The Liberal *Daily Chronicle* of London commented in these words on Tilak's conviction: "Wildness, discontent, mischievous rubbish, there may be in plenty. But we have got on with it and we shall get on with it again. Prove real sedition—above all, conclusively connect it with crime—and we should all favour sharp, stern punishment. But when it comes to overhauling poems and constructing elaborate innuendoes from eulogies of picturesque and popular bandits one feels that the Government are on a perilous path. There is one aspect of the 'Sedition' trial in India which must not be lost sight of. And that is, the new definition of 'disaffection' enunciated by Mr. Justice Strachey. . . . According to him 'disaffection' may be seditious even though it be simply strong disapproval of some omission on the part of the Government. We

feel confident that such an interpretation of the law would not be tolerated in England and if not speedily over-ruled may produce grave mischief in India."

As to the opinion of the man in the street in India it was voiced by Mr. Surendranath Bannerjee at the Congress Session. He said, "I declare on my behalf and on behalf of the entire native Press that in our heart of hearts we believe Mr. Tilak to be innocent of the charge brought against him. The ends of technical justice may have been satisfied but substantial justice has grievously failed. My sympathy goes forth to Mr. Tilak in his prison home, for whom the nation is in tears. I am convinced of his innocence and although I am unable to be with him physically in his solitary cell I assure you I am with him in mind and soul." The vast audience in the Congress Pendal showed the nation's sympathy unmistakably by rising to its feet. They greeted the mention of Tilak's name by prolonged applause which lasted for more than five minutes. "This was a unique sight and experience never before witnessed in the history of the Congress," was the comment of a newspaper at the time.

A special appeal was made to the Privy Council in London against the judgment of the Bombay High Court, in which Mr. H. H. Asquith, who later became Prime Minister of England, appeared for the accused, but it was unsuccessful, and Tilak served twelve months out of the eighteen before he was released. He was first sent to the Dongari Jail where he had served three months' imprisonment in 1882 with his friend Agarkar, and then transferred to the Byculla House of Correction where he was given the work of carding the coconut fibre for making mats. Tilak was a model prisoner and worked hard and ungrudgingly at whatever task was given to him. He could not reconcile himself, however, to the prison food. Other prisoners got meat once a week, but Tilak, being a strict vegetarian, had to content himself with a piece of bread, vegetables, a little salt, chillies and onions. Unfortunately, he was allergic to onions and hated garlic, the two favourite aids with which the prison cook flavoured his insipid cabbage and lumps of potato. Tilak was not allowed the diet he was used to but he never asked for any special treatment. And so the editor-prisoner ate his bread, dipping it in cold water, and continued to work on the coir matting.

The Government regarded Tilak as a common criminal according to the strict interpretation of the Indian Penal Code which Tilak in

later days described as "India's Constitution", and which did not then recognize the category of political prisoners. He was therefore entitled to no special concessions and the prison authorities, being "loyal and constitutional", were prepared to allow him to starve! In less than two months his weight came down from 135 lbs. to 110 lbs. and when the news of his worsening health leaked out, people began to fear the worst. Indian newspapers expressed their deep anxiety and questioned the "sanity and justice" of the Bombay Government in meting out such cruel treatment to a man like Tilak who was, before he was sent to prison, not only a member of the Governor's Legislative Council, but also a member of the Poona Municipality and a Fellow of Bombay University. The Government could, of course, see that this public criticism was justified, but it was not prepared to act. As usual, considerations of prestige stood in the way.

Soon, a fresh outbreak of plague in Bombay gave the Government an excuse to transfer Tilak from the Byculla prison in Bombay to the Yerawda Jail in Poona—a very welcome change as he now returned to a climate he was used to and the arrangements for his food were also changed for the better. Many people thought that Tilak's life was saved by this dreaded disease which killed thousands of people in the first five years of its appearance in India. It is no wonder that some of his admirers frankly "thanked" the epidemic rather than the bureaucracy, for Tilak's improved living conditions.

Tilak was now given a small daily ration of milk and ghee (clarified butter) which made some difference to his health. Instead of the rough coir matting work he had done in Bombay Jail he was put on to dyeing yarn. In addition, he was allowed light in his cell to read for three hours every night. Up to a point this put an end to his intellectual starvation in prison, for, though he was not allowed current newspapers and periodicals, he could read books on philosophy, religion and antiquities. It was during this period of confinement that Tilak prepared the notes for his book, *The Arctic Home in the Vedas,* which made Western scholars revise their old ideas about the antiquity of the Vedas and the Aryan civilization.

The outbreak of plague in Bombay was the reason the Government gave for removing Tilak to the Poona jail, but there were other and more weighty reasons. Mr. Setlur, one of Tilak's friends, had written to the Howard League in London giving details of Tilak's

state of health and the prison conditions under which he was made to serve his sentence. Mr. William Tallak, the secretary of the League, made representations to the Secretary of State for India, Lord George Hamilton, but drew blank at first. The official reply was typical—it characterized Mr. Setlur's statements about Tilak as "erroneous and unfounded", but added, "Tilak is being treated according to the regulations of the Indian jails. He can if necessary petition the local government." The Howard League was not satisfied with this reply and Mr. Tallak wrote back to warn Lord George Hamilton that "if Mr. Tilak should die in jail it would attract widespread criticism, both in this country and in India, of the Indian prison régime and this of course would be very undesirable from the point of view especially of the Government." This had the desired effect and although the Secretary of State maintained his original stiff attitude, the Government of Bombay was probably "advised" to look into the jail treatment of Tilak.

This approach to the Howard League proved useful in a wider sense. Tilak's case brought to the notice of the League the harsh conditions which political prisoners had to suffer in Indian jails. Before Tilak's imprisonment the Government made no distinction between an ordinary criminal prisoner and one serving a sentence for sedition. That year the League passed a general resolution which paved the way for drawing the necessary distinction—although it took twenty-two years for the Howard League's resolution to gain acceptance. In the annual report of 1898, the resolution of the General Council of the League is stated in these terms: "The Committee of the Howard Association have lately received various communications from India, referring to actual and prospective imprisonments, for real or alleged infringements of the Press Laws of that country. The Committee are of opinion that, in general, this class of offences ought to be regarded as being of a political rather than a criminal nature, and that the punishment should be differentiated accordingly."

Tilak's Indian and British friends continued their efforts to get him released from prison. Sir William Hunter, a Liberal M.P., and his friends in Parliament never missed an opportunity to ask questions about Tilak and press for his release. The conviction of Tilak had shocked European Sanskrit scholars and there was already some talk in the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge of taking

effective steps to release him. Professor Max Muller, the world's greatest authority on the Vedas, was in correspondence with Tilak when the latter published his first essay in Vedic research under the title of the *Orion*. Although Muller had not completely accepted Tilak's novel thesis, he had conceded the validity of certain of his conclusions and had expressed the hope that further research along Tilak's lines would be fruitful. Professor Max Muller, with the help of Sir William Hunter, M.P., and Mr. William Cain, M.P., organized a petition to the Queen, signed by a number of influential men, asking for clemency for the learned author of the *Orion*. As a result Tilak was given certain facilities for literary work at night in the prison and was eventually released on September 7th, 1898, about six months before the completion of his term.

The Government made this gesture in response to the demand of the public and to the political pressure brought on it through Parliament. But the gesture lacked grace. The Government asked Tilak to accept two conditions: (1) that he would neither countenance nor take part, directly or indirectly, in any demonstration relating to his release or to his conviction or sentence; and (2) that he would do nothing by act, speech or writing to excite disaffection against the Government.

Tilak had no difficulty in accepting the first condition as he never much cared to be the centre of public demonstrations; what he needed most on his release was a quiet place where he could go to escape the crowds, the receptions and the congratulatory meetings. But he could not accept the second condition, for that would be to commit political hari-kari. So to get over the difficulty he added this amendment to the conditions: "I hereby accept and agree to abide by the above conditions, understanding that by the 'act, speech or writing' referred to in the second condition is meant such act, speech or writing as may be pronounced by a Court of Law to constitute an offence under the Indian Penal Code, and I acknowledge that, should I fail to fulfil those conditions or any portion of them, the Governor of Bombay in Council may cancel the remission of my punishment, whereupon I may be arrested by any police officer without warrant and remanded to undergo the unexpired portion of my original sentence."

We have said the Government's gesture in releasing Tilak lacked grace. It lacked grace because in the first instance it betrayed its

inability to appreciate Tilak's mission in life, and secondly, it took nearly seven months to make up its mind to accept his amendment to the conditions of his "ticket-of-leave". It should be remembered that the negotiations for his release began in February, yet he was not actually released until September. Tilak knew he was bound to clash with the Government sooner or later when he resumed his public activities. He was prepared, however, to take advantage of the Government's offer as far as it went and wrote, so to speak, a post-dated cheque for serving the remaining sentence of six months if any "act, speech or writing" of his was held seditious by a court of law. He voluntarily agreed that, in such a case, any future sentence should be increased by six months. Thus, without committing political suicide, he secured his release. There was no generosity in the Government's action but, as they were anxious to make some gesture to the British public and Tilak was prepared to accommodate them, the mutual understanding could be described as quid pro quo arrangement.

Tilak passed through the prison gates after nine o'clock at night and went straight to his house in the city. The police department, to its great surprise, found the greater part of the town illuminated in honour of Tilak's return, and the news of his release spread all over the country in no time. On the day after he left prison Tilak received no fewer than 120 congratulatory telegrams from all parts of India and from all classes of people, and, of course, there were many celebrations in honour of the occasion.

Tilak, a man of robust constitution, often took part in youthful sports—particularly long-distance swimming which he enjoyed most of all, but the twelve months in gaol undermined his health to such an extent that he could hardly walk. When he returned home, his nephew and manager, Mr. Dhondopant Vidwans, found him "a skeleton—eyes sunken deep, cheeks pallid and pinched, and gait unsteady". Tilak's first concern, therefore, was to get back his lost health, so he went with his family to his favourite mountain retreat, Sinhagarh—away from the hustle and bustle of Poona, and away from the constant stream of visitors calling to congratulate him on his release. There he enjoyed two months' complete rest and regained his mental and spiritual balance. Sinhagarh is an old fort built high up in the Sahyadri Mountains, overlooking a vast plain. The sunset and sunrise, as seen from the northern tower, are magnificent

sights. According to popular belief the water of the reservoir, called Deo-Tanke or God's Pond, has medicinal properties. The name of Shivaji, Tilak's revered hero, is intimately connected with the fort, as it was taken in battle by Tanaji Malusare, one of his generals. Tilak chose this spot for its serene quietness and exhilarating mountain air; "There is something in the atmosphere of Sinhagarh," he used to say, "which always helps me to steady my nerves and see things in clearer perspective."

On his return to Poona he went to attend the Congress Session held in Madras that year, but did not take part in it. This was misconstrued by his opponents as a sign of weakness and of fear of Government reprisals. The truth was, as he explained to the correspondent of the *South Indian Post*, that he had decided not to accept any speaking engagements as he was still suffering from the effects of his imprisonment and was feeling extremely weak. He declared, "It is wrong to assume that I have given an undertaking to the Government not to speak in public". The correspondent then asked him what his future plans were. He replied, "I will be doing exactly what I have been doing before".

As he had travelled as far south as Madras, he decided upon a journey to Colombo in Ceylon for a short holiday—the first time he had ever travelled for pleasure. He was deeply interested in the ancient culture of Ceylon and enjoyed studying the old Buddhist monuments and manuscripts in Candy and elsewhere. The only other time Tilak left India on a pleasure trip was in the following year, 1899, after the Lucknow Session of the Congress, when he travelled to Burma and visited the city of Mandalay and the famous golden pagoda. He little knew that before long he would be returning to this Burmese city as a state prisoner and spend nearly six years there!

During Tilak's imprisonment and convalescence the *Kesari* had been edited with great success by his two able lieutenants, Mr. N. C. Kelkar and Mr. K. P. Khadilkar. Tilak took over the editorship of the newspaper again in July 1899, and in the very first article he wrote he made it clear that *Kesari*, which meant Tilak, had not changed in the least. He declared, "Despite the new situation now created (by the novel definition of sedition) we are determined to continue to work for the attainment of our objective (Swaraj). We need not be afraid of anybody so long as our hearts are pure and unsullied by hatred."

With the return of Tilak to freedom all his old public activities crowded on him as before. The Ganapati and Shivaji festivals were revived and continued to be celebrated and used for purposes of mass education and political propaganda. With his return to the scene and the resumption of the editorship of his newspaper, Tilak brought back to the political life of Maharashtra the inspiration and vigour which only he could give it.

11

TAI MAHARAJ CASE

Soon after his release from prison Tilak was called upon to attend to the affairs of his friend Baba Maharaj at whose dying request he had agreed to act as a trustee of his estate and to watch over the interests of his young widow. When he accepted the trusteeship, he could little have guessed that he would be caught in a hopeless web of litigation which was to last in one form or another till his death in 1920.

For Tilak the year 1897 proved fateful in more ways than one. Not only did it see him in prison but it sowed the seeds of a lawsuit which took up a large part of his valuable time, cost him a fortune and probably shortened his life by several years. This was the Tai Maharaj case, which became woven into the thread of Tilak's political life. On the face of things it was a private dispute between Tilak and the co-trustees on one side and Tai Maharaj (the young widow of Baba Maharaj) on the other. But in fact it was a fight between Tilak and the Government officials. And though it actually began in July 1901, it had its roots in the sedition trial of Tilak which started in July 1897.

The circumstances which involved Tilak in this affair have a tragi-comic air about them. He had been arrested for sedition, and two attempts to obtain his release on bail had failed. But at the third attempt he succeeded, and returned to Poona on August 6th, 1897, to prepare his defence (the case was to come on in the High Court of Bombay in about a month's time). But misfortunes never come singly; on the day of his arrival home he heard his friend Baba Maharaj had a severe attack of cholera. It soon became plain that Baba had very little hope of recovery. He made a will and pressed Tilak to be a trustee along with Mr. G. S. Khaparde, Mr. Kumbhojkar and Mr. Nagpurkar It was a simple document; the

important part of it was these words: "My wife is expecting a baby. If she gives birth to a daughter, or if a son is born but lives only a short time, then for the purpose of continuing the name of my family, with the *vichara* (consent and consultation) of the trustees, a boy shall be placed, as often as may be necessary, for adoption, on the lap of my wife, in accordance with the *shastras* (religious practices), and the trustees shall, on behalf of that son, carry on the management of my moveable and fixed estate until he attains his majority."

Some months after Baba's death his widow gave birth to a son, who died two months later, while Tilak was still in prison.

When he came out of gaol, he had to take up the management of the estate, which he found encumbered with heavy debts and with creditors pressing for payment. In the early stages at least, Tilak had to find money from his own pocket to satisfy them. The only way the heavy liabilities could be reduced was by following strict economy. This was hardly likely to find favour with the widow, for, like any inexperienced young woman with what she thought was a rich estate to draw on, she was getting into the habit of spending money freely and was afraid her allowance would be cut. The hangers-on who surrounded her painted a gloomy picture of her future as a mere pensioner dependent upon the good will of the trustees, and persuaded her to get rid of them and adopt a boy of her choice, who would be willing to do as she wanted and allow her to have a large part of the income from the estate. Acting on this advice, she secretly began negotiations to adopt Bala Maharaj of Kolapur, who was actually four years older than herself. In this she found a ready supporter in Mr. Nagpurkar, one of the trustees.

Tilak and Khaparde had different ideas. They had no personal axe to grind in this matter of adoption, but they could see how the estate would be ruined if Tai Maharaj were allowed to have her way. They therefore suggested that the widow should go with them to Aurangabad, in the Nizam's dominion, and adopt a boy from the Babre branch of the family. There they found a suitable boy, named Jagannath, who was just seven years old. The widow agreed with the choice and wrote to the boy's father, expressing her willingness to adopt the child. And so before a gathering of *shastries* (men leaned in religious rites) and prominent citizens, the boy's father put

him in the lap of the widow, and Jagannath was formally adopted according to the ancient custom. The papers relating to the adoption were signed on the spot by the parties concerned and were witnessed by the gentlemen assembled there. This completed the boy's legal adoption.

Everything had gone smoothly so far, but as soon as Tai Maharaj returned to Poona she became restless, and under the influence of the hangers-on, who saw in the Aurangabad adoption the end of their hopes of an easy life, she approached Mr. Aston, the District Judge and Agent to the Deccan Sardars (the Maharaj family was one of the Sardars) to lodge a complaint against Tilak for forcing her to adopt Jagannath. On July 29th, 1901, she applied for revocation of the probate granted to Tilak and the other trustees, and thus set in train the long and weary litigation which lasted in one form or another for over twenty years.

The specific grounds of her application were (1) that the grant of probate to Tilak and others had become void and inoperative through the birth (and subsequent death) of a son to Tai Maharaj and (2) that the executors had become unfit to act in the trust, so necessitating the appointment of new trustees. On these issues Mr. Aston decided in the widow's favour, held the Aurangabad adoption disproved, and revoked the probate. But he did not stop at that. He said that in his opinion "Mr. Tilak's deposition and whole behaviour was untruthful". He described Tilak as a "fencing, prevaricating, quibbling witness; demeanour distinctly untruthful". Furthermore, not satisfied with discrediting Tilak by revoking the probate he found (as he thought) that Tilak had committed a number of offences in the transactions brought to his notice. And he crowned the proceedings in his Court as a Civil Judge by taking action under paragraph 476 of the Criminal Procedure Code and committing Tilak to the City magistrate to be dealt with according to the Criminal Law.

Seven charges were listed against Tilak, the most damaging of which accused him of perjury and forgery and the illegal detention of Tai Maharaj in her Wada. Not content with a committal order on these charges, Mr. Aston also suggested to the Government that it should investigate certain other collateral charges arising out of the adoption transactions: giving false information to the police, cheating, unlawful assembly, riot, etc. The committal order was

made on April 7th, 1902—possibly the darkest day in Tilak's life (though, in all conscience, it was full of sad events and strange changes of fortune). Imagine Tilak's position: he already had a large number of prejudiced critics, many active and bitter opponents and the whole of officialdom as his sworn enemies; and now he had been judicially denounced by a District Judge as an obstinate, high-handed, unchivalrous and unscrupulous character who would not stop even at committing perjury and forgery against a defenceless girl still in her teens. Tilak had already been convicted for sedition (an offence, however, of a purely public nature) but now he was denounced to the world as a man whose character had proved as unworthy in private dealings as it had already shown itself in public life.

In creating this atmosphere Aston had indeed done his job well. The anglo-Indian community applauded him for having caught in his net the biggest and most turbulent fish that had ever troubled the waters of India's public life; and he was not only showered with compliments for his legal acumen but received high praise for his untiring labours in doing justice to the cause of a helpless young widow.

What was Tilak's reaction to this undeserved and baseless calumny and disgrace? Naturally he felt indignant; his self-respect was outraged and his personal honour sullied. But he never lost faith: "Those who knew the kind of faith he had in him could discern the distant silver lining, so that even the heavy and black clouds hanging over his head were relieved by his optimism," wrote Mr. N. C. Kelkar in the *Mahratta*.

Tilak lodged an appeal in the High Court of Bombay and Aston's decision in the matter of probate was reversed. The seven charges framed against Tilak were gone into by a special magistrate appointed for that purpose. The fact that the first charge was quashed only after eight months of prolonged trial gives some idea of the nature of the proceedings—an inquisition rather than an investigation—conducted by the Government against Tilak. The charge of perjury was then taken up and on October 2nd, 1903, Tilak was convicted and sentenced to eighteen months' rigorous imprisonment with a fine of Rs. 1,000, which was reduced to six months by the Sessions Judge, Mr. Lucas. When he was taken to gaol Tilak was handcuffed like a common felon, a most disgraceful

proceeding. The *People and Pratibhashi*, a Calcutta newspaper, commented: "We were not by any means prepared for the startling and shameful tidings which reached us yesterday: the news of a distinguished native gentleman of Bombay having been in the Court, and, in the presence of the District Judge of Poona, manacled as a common felon. We say—and we say it with the strongest feeling—shame upon all the perpetrators of this foul and disgraceful act. What was the necessity for handcuffing Mr. Tilak? Was it through fear of his escaping? Nothing of the kind. It was, some might say, to gratify the spite of a few Government underlings who experienced the delight which the coward always feels in kicking a man who is down. Our only wonder is, and we wonder a good deal at it, that the Governor of Bombay can stand by, with his hands in his pockets, when such a shameful act takes place in his Presidency, an act the consequences of which may be very far-reaching indeed. In the beginning it was only a small matter that set off the Indian Mutiny and it would, we think, be well to avoid a repetition of such unfortunate mistakes."

The *Tribune* of Lahore wrote:

"It is needless to say that all India will await with baited breath the result of the Appeal from the Magistrate's judgment. We must add that the majority of our countrymen are not waiting for the High Court's verdict in order to rebuild their estimate of Mr. Tilak, his work and character. His hold on the minds of his hosts of friends and admirers is not of a nature to be affected by verdicts of Law Courts. He has lived and worked in full view of the public, as it were, all his days. There is no mistaking such a character; it is unfolded to its inmost depths before the eyes of all who know him. A Court of Law on the other hand is liable to errors and misconceptions."

The High Court, on appeal, found Tilak innocent on every charge. The conviction was set aside and the fine ordered to be refunded.

The criminal case now being at an end, the civil case over the adoption came up for hearing before the first-class subordinate Judge in June 1904, and was decided in Tilak's favour in July 1906. In the meantime Tai Maharaj had died, but the case was continued in the name of her daughter, Shantabai, on whose behalf an appeal was made to the High Court. After two years it decided against Tilak who, in his turn, appealed to the Privy Council in London and

finally won the case in 1915. The Government, however, was as determined as ever to continue harassing Tilak; they delayed the execution of the decree of the Privy Council, so that the estate could not be handed over to Jagannath until February 1917.

During his lifetime Tilak faced mány trials but this particular one was perhaps the only one which caused him mental anguish. Right from the first day he realized that it was not going to be a clean fight. The forces of officialdom which lined themselves alongside Tai Maharaj commanded all the resources of money and patronage which only a Government possesses. On top of this, the men in authority in Poona at this time became so much a prey to their own prejudices against Tilak that they seemed to have harried him relentlessly. The judges, Mr. Aston and Mr. Clements, who by their so-called "judgments" conspired to take away Tilak's character, brand him for ever as a "moral leper" and oust him from public life, were nothing but men of straw.

In the hands of government officials acting, as it seemed, from motives of spite and prejudice, the Tai Maharaj case became a means of deliberate persecution. And yet such was the constitution of the government established by law in India that there was no one individual in the whole official world on whom the responsibility for this could be fixed. "A Government," it is said, "has no body to be kicked and no soul to be damned" and the immunity enjoyed in this respect by the Government extends also by law to its servants. Indeed, the persecution and mental torture to which Tilak was subjected under the name of legal proceedings will remain in Indian political history as an unparalleled example of official malice and unscrupulousness.

12

DARE AND DO
(1905–1908)

> The boycott is a substitute for war. As we cannot go to war as did the Boers in South Africa, the next best thing is to refuse to buy the British goods. That is the spirit behind the Swadeshi and boycott movement.
>
> LOKAMANYA TILAK

I. NEW IDEAS AND NEW WEAPONS

The years from 1905 and 1908 form a landmark in the modern history of India, and a thrilling chapter in the political career of Tilak. These four years saw the Mahratta leader outgrowing his provincial fame and emerging as a national hero of all India. He was no longer merely a leader of the Poona Brahmans or a leader of Maharashtra; now he personified the national movement itself. From now on whether he was in prison or free, his personality and spirit became the driving force of Indian nationalism and urged the people on till finally the goal of Swarajya, independence, was won. With characteristic energy and resourcefulness Tilak led the national forces so skilfully that the people's enthusiasm grew by leaps and bounds; they now became a nation ready to make any sacrifice for the liberation of the motherland.

Strangely enough, this period of intense activity and agitation had its origin in the arbitrary decision of Lord Curzon to divide up the province of Bengal, an action described by the *Statesman*, the foremost British newspaper in India, as the "crowning folly of Lord Curzon's régime". Without prior notice or any hint of what was in the wind the partition was announced on July 20th, 1905. The three weeks which followed the announcement shook India. The leaders of Bengal decided to observe October 16th, 1905, as a day of

mourning. On that day, wrote a Calcutta newspaper, "immense numbers of people in the two divisions of the partitioned province abstained from lighting kitchen fires, went about barefoot, performed ceremonial baths in rivers or sacred tanks, and tied on one another's wrists the sacred rakhi (red silk or cotton thread) as a symbol of fraternal and national unity". A mammoth meeting in the Calcutta Town Hall that evening declared "a general boycott of British goods as a practical protest against the proposed partition".

Tilak saw in the partition a god-given opportunity to forge the solidarity of the Indian people and to lead a nation-wide movement which could become truly national in character and scope, embracing all classes and reaching every hamlet and village of India. He visualized a gigantic popular movement sweeping the country with its spirit of enthusiasm and self-help, which he epitomized in four basic principles: Swadeshi, Boycott, National Education and Swarajya. From the day the partition of Bengal was announced to the day he was sentenced to six years' deportation in 1908, we see him leading, organizing and directing the movement all over the country; his energy and drive at this time remind one of the words used about Gladstone by Lord Hugh Cecil: "When the bugle sounded every faculty was in its place and at command, armed and clothed with all the resources of knowledge and drilled after Frederick the Great's fashion, to march 'like a pair of compasses'."

Tilak's first article in *Kesari* (August 15th, 1905) on the new situation was entitled "The Crisis Arrives", and set the pace for the Bengal agitation. It was followed by many more, supporting the demand for the annulment of the partition, calling for the boycott of British goods, appealing to the people to support national schools, exhorting them to buy nothing but home-made goods, condemning the repressive, autocratic measures of the Government and strongly criticizing the weak-kneed policy of certain Indian politicians. Tilak unhesitatingly attacked men and institutions, however well established, which stood in the way of the national cause. "The Crisis Arrives" was a call to the nation not to fall back, however repressive the Government's policy might be. It was a call to the people "to press forward and not to look behind"; it was a call to the Congress leaders to give up their "mendicant policy" and stand shoulder to shoulder with their kith and kin in Bengal "who were cruelly insulted by a British bully like Lord Curzon". This article and the one

which appeared in *Kesari* in the following week—"National Boycott"—became so popular that they were reprinted in newspapers in Calcutta, Patna, Benares, Allahabad, Madras and many other places and became the testament of the people's agitation which swept the country for the next four years.

Lala Lajput Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal and Arabindo Ghose, three outstanding nationalists, rallied round Tilak's banner and wholeheartedly accepted his four-fold programme. Tilak laid bare in a masterly analysis the motives that lay behind the Curzon move. The Government spokesmen were telling people that the partition was purely for administrative convenience as the Province of Bengal had become too unwieldy for one Lieutenant-Governor to rule. It is true that at the time of the partition Bengal was the largest province in India with a population of nearly eighty millions and some adjustment was necessary to secure administrative efficiency. This, however, could, it was pointed out, be achieved by separating the non-Bengali districts from Bengal proper. But Curzon's move in partitioning the Province was not purely administrative. It was very much coloured by political motives.

The truth was that the Government saw a sense of national solidarity "visibly growing" in this huge province. Wealthy land-owning families sent their sons and daughters abroad for education, and the young people were returning home with ideas of political and social equality; the Congress was proving a stimulating influence to many middle-class people and, above all, the province as a whole was becoming more and more politically conscious. As a result the old barriers between the Hindus and Moslems were breaking down and the two communities were coming closer together.

This sense of national solidarity began to disturb the Imperial dream of the Viceroy and in the subtle move of dividing Bengal into an eastern and a western province he found a means of breaking this solidarity. Tilak immediately detected the true motive behind the partition, which he described as an attempt to break Bengal into two, so separating the Hindu and Moslem Bengalis. He declared that it was the duty of the people outside Bengal to make the grievance of their Bengali brothers their own and to help them preserve the sense of unity and nationality which the people of the partitioned province felt so strongly. This was later corroborated by Mr. A. C. Mazumdar, the author of *Indian National Evolution*, who writes,

"Fully resolved to crush this new spirit by dividing the people against themselves, Lord Curzon proceeded to East Bengal and there at large meetings of Mohammedans, specially convened for the purpose, explained to them that his object in partitioning Bengal was not only to relieve the Bengal administration, but also to create a Mohammedan province, where Islam could be predominant and its followers in the ascendency". Professor Gurmukh Nihal Singh in his authoritative compilation on *Landmarks in Indian Constitutional and National Development* observes, "Indeed, it appears that there was some such sinister motive behind the scheme: otherwise one of the two alternative schemes—of which one was said to be favoured at the time by Mr. Broderick, the then Secretary of State for India, and the other was finally accepted in 1911—would surely have been adopted". Indeed, the whole policy followed by the Government of the newly-created province of Eastern Bengal and Assam lent strong support to the belief that Curzon in dividing Bengal was deliberately pursuing a policy of crushing Bengali nationalism.

No doubt this machiavellian policy of the Viceroy was able to win over a few Moslem supporters to the partition of the Province, but the more representative and influential section of the Moslem population of Eastern Bengal refused to swallow the bait. Speaking at the 1906 Congress in Calcutta, Nawabzada Khajah Atikullah, who was the brother of Nawab Salimullah (a supporter of Lord Curzon's partition scheme), openly declared, "I may tell you at once that it is not correct that the Mussalmans of Eastern Bengal are in favour of the partition of Bengal. The real fact is that it is only a few leading Mohammedans who for their own purposes support the measure." Another important declaration opposing the partition came from Nawab Ameer Hossain, C.I.E., who was the President of the Central Mohammedan Association, Calcutta. He said, "My committee are of the opinion that no portion of the Bengali-speaking race should be separated from Bengal without the clearest necessity for such separation, and they think in the present case such necessity does not exist".

Lord Curzon's partition move is described by many as an ill-advised and ill-conceived measure; but to Tilak it was a blessing in disguise, for it enabled him to galvanize the country by means of the movements for Swadeshi and boycott. Under his leadership the whole of India from Calcutta in the east to Karachi in the west and

from Delhi in the north to Madras in the south voiced its indignation against the partition and its sincere sympathy for Bengal.

Tilak, quick to sense the manifestation of this new spirit and life in the country, sounded a call to the people to abandon the old methods—such as asking the Government to reform a particular department of administration, to abolish this tax or that to lighten the burden, or to redress local or provincial grievances. Instead, he said, "The time has come to demand 'Swaraj' or self-government. No piecemeal reform will do. The system of the present administration is ruinous to the country. It must mend or end."

His sustained political work over a period of twenty-five years had resulted in gathering around him a devoted band of workers ready to go into action the moment Tilak gave them the word. His lieutenants—among them Mr. N. C. Kelkar, the editor of the *Mahratta*, Mr. K. P. Khadilkar, an associate editor of *Kesari*, Mr. Gangadharrao Deshpande, a prominent leader from Karnatak, Mr. Dadasaheb Khaparde, a close colleague from Amaraoti, Mr. Bapu Anney of Yavatmal and Dr. B. Moonji of Nagpur—covered the whole of Western India with Tilak's message urging the adoption of the programme of Swadeshi and boycott as a practical demonstration of the people's solidarity with their Bengali brethren. Bombay, Maharashtra, the Central Provinces and Berar were swept by this new agitation. Shops for selling Swadeshi goods and leagues for collecting funds sprang up everywhere; students enrolled in hundreds to carry the message to the remote villages, and thousands took a solemn vow never to buy foreign goods—which meant British goods.

With such strong popular backing for his programme Tilak went to Benares to attend the Congress session of 1905, presided over by Professor G. K. Gokhale. Here he tried to force the hand of the Congress leaders and make them give up the old methods of passing paper resolutions; he urged them to adopt a militant policy based on self-respect and self-help.

With the arrival of Tilak and his Poona contingent the atmosphere became electrified. The delegates to the Congress had come there conscious of the great events that were taking place in the country, of the emotional upsurge of the Bengalis, of the Indian people's expectation of an effective lead from the Congress, of the new spirit and feeling roused by the "Lal-Bal-Pal" trio (Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal

Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal), and, above all, of the contemptuous treatment meted out to the Congress by the retiring Viceroy, Lord Curzon, in refusing to see Sir Henry Cotton who, earlier in the year, was to have waited on him with a Congress deputation. The political atmosphere of Benares was thus charged with emotion, resentment, frustration and expectancy.

Tilak lost no time in setting the pace; to the 10,000 men and women who had gathered to receive him at the railway station and smother him with flowers and bouquets he gave this stirring slogan: "Militancy—not Mendicancy". The crowds took up the cry enthusiastically, formed themselves into small groups and went round the ancient city shouting the new slogan. When he entered the Congress pendal he was received with louder cheers than any other leader. The delegations from the Punjab, under the leadership of Lajpat Rai, and the Bengal delegation, led by Bipin Chandra Pal, declared their complete identity of views with Tilak's programme and policy. The slogan "Militancy—not Mendicancy" began to echo through the corridors and camps of the Congress delegates of the different provinces. Even the President, Professor Gokhale, usually a cool and cautious man, could not escape the impact of the new spirit. It was said that he tore up the first two drafts of his presidential speech so as to be able to express the nation's mood of the hour.

Gokhale is a much maligned and misunderstood personality in the politics of the Congress, which he piloted for over fifteen years with tact and ability. His mild appearance and mellow look effectively concealed a heart and mind capable of heat and fire when the national pride of India was affronted or the people's sentiments were wilfully ignored. His address at Benares is a revealing document which shows, as nothing else does, where Gokhale's heart lay in politics: by sentiment and temperament he was an Extremist; by association and circumstance he had become a Moderate. In the Benares address at any rate, he presents the fighting side of his nature rather than the less agreeable aspect of Moderatism. He agreed with Tilak's description of Lord Curzon and called him the Aurangzeb of his times. He said: "There we find the same attempt at a rule excessively centralized and intensely personal, the same strenuous purpose, the same overpowering consciousness of duty, the same marvellous capacity for work, the same

sense of loneliness, the same persistence in a policy of distrust and repression, resulting in bitter exasperation all round."

Tilak was pleased to hear from the President's lips the words which he himself had made so familiar for the last five years. Mr. Gokhale went on: "The goal of the Congress is that India should be governed in the interests of the Indians themselves and that, in course of time, a form of Government should be attained in this country similar to what exists in the self-governing colonies of the British Empire. . . . Militarism, Service interests and the interests of English capitalists, all take precedence today over the true interests of the Indian people in the administration of the country. . . . Now the Congress wants all this to change so that India may be governed, first and foremost, in the interests of the Indians themselves."

This was the Congress's twenty-first session. It had "come of age" and Tilak thought it was therefore appropriate and proper that the President should state the final political ideal of the country. He himself had put it in a more homely and succinct term—Swaraj. However, he expressed his satisfaction at the Presidential address and hoped that Bengal's lead on Swadeshi and boycott would receive the strong support it deserved from all sides. But when Tilak wanted the Congress to pass an impressive resolution backing up the anti-Partition agitation Gokhale and his party began to fight shy.

In the subjects committee a resolution was put forward, welcoming to India the Prince of Wales and his Consort (later George V and Queen Mary). Tilak disliked this resolution and the mentality which lay behind it. He argued, that it was superfluous to extend a welcome to their Royal guests when they were already going about India and enjoying receptions and dinners given in their honour by the Viceroy and the Princes. The Bengali delegates were in complete agreement with Tilak in this matter and went a step further, by threatening to oppose the resolution in the open session.

The same sort of tussle between the young Bengalis and the Presidential Party developed when the resolutions relating to the boycott of British goods, Swadeshi, and National Education came up for discussion in the subjects committee. Here again, as with the resolution of welcome, Tilak effected a compromise. The language of these resolutions was toned down but the principles and ideals the nationalists stood for were conceded and the resolutions were passed unanimously.

The deliberations in the subjects committee made it abundantly clear that the delegations from Bengal and the Punjab, who represented the younger generation, were growing restive under the old leadership. This restiveness was not of course confined to these two provinces. There were many young men from Madras and other provinces who were equally dissatisfied with the timid and halting manner of the Congress managers. They decided to hold an open conference in the Congress camp to exchange views, and asked Tilak to address it.

Lala Lajpat Rai, the Punjab leader, one of the promoters of this conference, has stated in his well-known book *Young India* that "it was then that Tilak gave out the idea of passive resistance"—an idea at once novel, daring and inspiring. He continues: "The object of the passive resistance movement of his conception was threefold: (1) to destroy the hypnotic spell which had made the people and the country accept the omnipotence of their rulers and a kind of faith in their altruism; (2) to create a passionate love of liberty, accompanied by a spirit of sacrifice and readiness to suffer for the cause of the country; and (3) to win India's independence.

Tilak was eminently suited to lead the young and ardent spirits in the country as by temperament and conviction he was a man of action and hated the "mendicant's methods" of the Moderates which were confined to making petitions, memorials and protests couched in loyal terms. His preaching of passive resistance was not an idea which came to him on the impulse of the moment. He had given careful thought to it and had discussed the subject on several occasions in *Kesari*. His new slogan, "Militancy—not Mendicancy" was an inspired outburst, but here again its roots could be traced to the many articles in *Kesari* dealing with the work of the Congress.

Tilak sent his followers home to think over his programme of passive resistance and report to him the next year in Calcutta, where he further developed the idea in a lecture which has now become part of Indian history. In this he laid down what has become known as the "Tenets of the New Party". After tracing the evolution of the Indian National Congress he explains the difference between the Moderates and the Extremists and observes: "We are not armed and there is no necessity for arms, either. We have a stronger weapon, a political weapon, in boycott; we have perceived one fact, that the whole of this administration which is carried on by a handful of

Englishmen is carried on with our assistance. . . . We are all in subordinate service. They try to keep us in ignorance of our power of co-operating among ourselves, by which what is now in our own hands can be claimed by us and administered by us. The point is to have the entire control in our hands. . . . Every Englishman knows that they are a mere handful in this country and it is the business of every one of them to fool us into believing that we are weak and they are strong. That is politics. We have been deceived by such politics long enough. What the New Party wants you to do is to realize the fact that your future rests entirely in your hands. If you mean to be free, you can be free; if you do not mean to be free, you will fall and be for ever fallen. . . . If you have not the power of active resistance, have you not the power of self-denial and self-abstinence so as not to assist this foreign government to rule over you? This is boycott, and this is what is meant when we say boycott is a political weapon. We shall not give them our assistance to collect revenue and keep the peace. We shall not assist them in fighting beyond the frontiers or outside India with Indian blood and money. We shall not assist them in carrying on the administration of justice. We shall have our own courts, and when the time comes we shall not pay taxes. Can you do that by your united effort? If you can you are free from tomorrow. . . . This is the line of thought and action in which you must train yourself. This is the way a nation progresses—this is the way national sentiment progresses and this is the lesson you have to learn from the struggle now going on."

Tilak's programme of passive resistance and its subsequent elaboration in Calcutta came as a bombshell to the Moderate Party. Mr. Gokhale was prepared to accept in theory the movement for non-payment of taxes as legitimate, but he was not prepared to practise or preach it.

The clear and inspiring manner in which Tilak enunciated his ideal drew the vast majority of the people to his side and made him their idol; his very popularity and his enormous power over the masses, however, made many enemies for him among the Moderate leaders and the bureaucracy.

After the Benares Congress Tilak's fight for India's independence was threefold, for it was carried on on three fronts. On the first front he was working to rouse the people to fight for the country's freedom; on the second front he was exposing the weak and timid

policies of the Moderate leaders; and on the third front he was opposing the repressive measures of the Government which became more savage as the people's demand for self-government grew. It can be said that in the years between 1905 and 1908, when he was sentenced to six years' transportation, Tilak founded "the people of India". It was during this period that for the first time a definite form was given to the idea of Indian nationalism.

The Benares Congress marks an important stage in the political career of Tilak for, with his declaration of the principles of passive resistance, he burnt his boats on the burning ghats of the sacred city of Benares. Thinkers and philosophers such as Thorow in America and Tolstoi in Russia had put forward the abstract theory of passive resistance, but no one before Tilak had dressed it in everyday clothes and given it to the people to put into practice. It was Tilak's policy of passive resistance which, under the inspiring leadership and guidance of Mahatma Gandhi, assumed gigantic proportions after 1920 and which India practised for a quarter of a century under different labels and with varying success. First it was called non-co-operation; in 1930–1, civil disobedience, and in 1942 it became known as Satyagraha. Whatever the name given to Gandhi's movement, the basic principles enunciated by Tilak at Benares—namely, withholding the people's willing co-operation from the government—remained unchanged. It is true that Mahatma Gandhi made Tilak's principles more attractive and acceptable to the masses by giving them a spiritual interpretation; it is also true that, presented as a spiritual programme, the civil disobedience practised under Gandhi's leadership gained vastly in prestige as a political weapon and had a greater effect. Yet the fact remains that it was the vision and courage of Tilak which conceived the enormous possibilities of passive resistance as a political weapon —perhaps the only weapon a people completely disarmed and demoralized by a long period of slavery could use against an alien government.

His speech on passive resistance—the first positive step taken by the Indian people to fight the British Raj—opened the Tilak era in Indian politics. Although the immediate cause was the partition of Bengal and the first sparks of the new agitation were lit in Calcutta, it was to Poona that the centre of political activity shifted after the Benares Congress, for it was from there that the directives for

Swadeshi, Boycott, and National Education were issued; they were obeyed faithfully in all the provinces. Poona was well qualified to lead the movement, not only because of the towering personality of Tilak, but also because of its valuable experience in the fields of National Education and Swadeshi. We have already noticed the work of the Deccan Education Society and the Fergusson College of Poona. Similarly the Sarvajanik Sagba of Poona had already been experimenting with Swadeshi, co-operative exhibitions and village arbitration courts for a long time.

The Sabha can truly be described as the pioneer organization which started the Swadeshi movement in India. Its general secretary, Mr. J. V. Joshi, who was a first-class statistician, had reached the conclusion as long ago as 1875 that "Swadeshi is the only means for the salvation of India". Before the advent of Mahatma Gandhi, here was a man who started the movement to popularize hand-spun, hand-made cloth as a means of supporting home industry. His dhoti, long shirt, and turban were made of Khadi, the yarn for which was spun and woven by himself. He regarded this dress as suitable for any occasion. When he was invited by the Viceroy, Lord Lytton, for the Diamond Jubilee Durbar of Queen Victoria, to represent the Sarvajanik Sabha, he attended it in this homely garb. It was a very grand celebration, with all the glory of full-dress uniforms, colourful pageantry and impressive military parades. Nonchalantly Mr. Joshi (he was known as Sarvajanik Kaka) arrived on the scene, oblivious to imperial pomp and circumstance, and presented an address to the Throne on behalf of the people of India.

He looked on Swadeshi primarily as an economic means of reviving India's industrial life. Tilak accepted the economic interpretation of Swadeshi, but he also tacked on to it certain political aspects. When the leaders of Bengal first passed the Boycott Resolution on August 7th, 1905, boycott was intended as a temporary measure, and therefore in the original pledge drawn up for the people to sign a time limit was specifically mentioned. The boycott was to last until "the Partition was withdrawn". But Tilak explained to his Benares audience, as he had earlier expounded in fuller detail in *Kesari*, the real meaning and scope—both economic and political—of the weapon of boycott. It could not only be directed against a particular grievance like the Partition of Bengal but was also capable of being applied on a national scale

for the attainment of "Swarajya". (This article is known as "Rashtriya Bahishkar", or National Boycott: *Kesari*, August 22nd, 1905.)

Tilak's exposition of the wider application of boycott began to make its effect felt. Mr. Bipin Chandra Pal records in *The Spirit of Indian Nationalism* that "the pledges sent from Calcutta came back, duly signed by large numbers of people, but with the conditional sentence, 'until Partition is withdrawn', scored through". The boycott was a great success for some time. The "lucky day" of October 1905, on which a very large number of forward contracts in Manchester goods are generally made at Calcutta, passed without any business being done. Simultaneously with this decline in foreign goods, many indigenous industries began to revive—there was, for instance, a boom in handlooms all over India. "Provinces outside Bengal did not adopt a policy of active boycott, but the cry of Swadeshi was taken up by all the country, and a great impetus was given to indigenous manufacturers. The significance of the movement in Bengal, where it was rigorously pursued, lay in the fact that prince and peasant, capitalist and labourer, literate and illiterate, educated and uneducated, all joined hands."

Tilak always described the Swadeshi and boycott movement as a double-barrelled gun and was more than pleased to note that this weapon was finding its mark. His English weekly paper the *Mahratta* made a point of publishing extracts from the Anglo-Indian newspapers to give its readers an opportunity of knowing the reactions of the ruling community. *The Englishman* of Calcutta was one such mouthpiece of the Anglo-Indians which had this to say about the boycott movement and its effect on British imports in India: "It is absolutely true that Calcutta warehouses are full of fabrics that can not be sold. In the earlier days of the boycott it was the fashion to assert that depression in the piece-goods trade was due to this or the other economic cause.

"Many prominent Marwari firms have been absolutely ruined and a number of the biggest European import houses have had either to close down their piece-goods branch or to put up with a very small business, where they previously had a large one. As for stocks in warehouses, they tend to grow larger, as Marwari and Indian buyers who had given forward orders now state that they cannot afford to take delivery. These facts are now so well known

that it is idle to attempt to hide them. Indeed the time has come when all injuries inflicted on trade by boycott should be made fully known. There is no question of encouraging the boycotters, as they need no encouragement. But there is the question of thoroughly awakening the public at home and the Government of India to the fact that in boycott the enemies of the Raj have found a most effective weapon for injuring British interests in the country. . . . Boycott must not be acquiesced in, or it will more surely ruin the British connection with India than an armed revolution."

Such was the rising tempo of the national movement when the arrangements for the 1906 session of the Congress came up for discussion in Calcutta and Bombay.

There were no two opinions about Tilak's part in making the Swadeshi and boycott movement such a tremendous success; his popularity in the country was unparalleled; his influence over the younger generation in the educated classes as well as over the peasants and workers in the country was admitted by all as "unique and unsurpassed by anybody in the history of modern India". Lastly, it was equally true that the Government feared and hated no one so bitterly as it did this Mahratta leader.

It was not a matter for surprise, therefore, that the forward-looking younger section in the Congress wanted Tilak to preside over the Calcutta session. Arabindo Ghose, the Bengal leader and editor of the *Vandemataram*, suggested Tilak's name for this high honour. Other provincial committees, such as those for the Punjab and Central Provinces, followed this lead and Tilak's election to the Presidency seemed assured.

At this the Moderates became nervous. They knew Tilak's power both as a militant leader and as an astute organizer, and feared that if he were elected president the control of the Congress would slip from their hands. To prevent this happening, therefore, they invited Dadabhai Naoroji to preside over the Calcutta Congress, an invitation which the old man readily accepted. The Moderates were right in thinking that his nomination would not be opposed by anybody in the country, for he had served India fearlessly and selflessly for more than fifty years. His *magnum opus*, *The Un-British Rule in India* had so thoroughly exposed the British exploitation of India that his name had become a household word in the country. He was the first Indian to be elected a Member of the British House of Commons

where again he had courageously bearded the lion in his den and proved both his great statesmanship and deep understanding of Indo-British relations. He had began his political career as a Liberal, but the rebuffs and disappointments he had received in his long career had driven him into the camp of the Radicals and he had become a great friend of men like John Bright and Charles Bradlaugh. The choice of such a man to preside over the annual session of the Congress at such a critical time was universally applauded. Even the partisans of Tilak had nothing but approval for Naoroji's nomination, for they respected him as the oldest worker in the cause of Indian nationalism. He was eighty-one at the time and India expected from him the inspiration of leadership born out of such long public service and sacrifice, and their expectations were more than fully met.

II. THE DEMAND FOR SWARAJ

The Bannerjees, Mehtas and Gokhales in the Moderate movement had brought in Dadabhai hoping that he would keep Tilak and his New Party in check; they hoped a word of advice, counselling patience, from the "Grand Old Man of India" would quieten their lively spirits, and that this would allow them to continue to rule the Congress. Events soon proved that the Moderate leaders were building castles in the air. The President showed no desire to damp the ardent spirits of Tilak, Lajpat Rai and Arabindo Ghose. He was endowed with "sweetness of temper and infinite patience and tact", but also he was "much nearer the advanced wing of the Congress than any one of the Moderate Party".[1]

Tilak had had no misgivings or doubts about the President. He had correctly forecast, ten days before the Congress met in Calcutta (*Kesari*, December 18th, 1906), that Dadabhai can have only one message to give to India, namely that of Swaraj. With a wealth of quotations from the veteran leader's writings and speeches Tilak proved that Dadabhai would be the last person to oblige the Moderates by throwing cold water on the enthusiasm and patriotism of the New Party which advocated a more militant policy for the Congress in order to draw the attention of the British people to the demands of India. Tilak wrote: "If we study his views carefully we will find

[1] *Dadabhai Naoroji* by R. R. Masani.

Dadabhai the most extreme of the extremists . . . that the British rule over India is a canker which is eating into the vitals of the country is his considered conclusion. It is true that he still believes that the inroads of this disease could be stopped by educating and converting the British electors to India's viewpoint; but he is also asking the people to unite and to use every means in their power, and to fight resolutely for sweeping away the impediments in their way. Such being the case, it would be unwise to suppose that he would be opposed to the resolutions on Swadeshi, boycott and National Education. We must also remember that Dadabhai is not an arm-chair politician who thinks of politics as a diversion for leisure hours. He has devoted his whole life to this business and he knows the value of the new spirit which has been sweeping the country lately."

The Calcutta Congress was the largest political gathering ever witnessed in India up to that time. Eighteen hundred delegates came for the session from all parts of the country and every day more than ten thousand spectators attended it. The presidential address was phrased in sober, parliamentary language but it was full of political dynamite. Its keynote was Swaraj, which he declared to be the only solution for the many ills of India. A short extract shows the directness of his thought: "We do not ask any favours. We want only justice. Instead of going into any further details of our rights as British citizens, the whole matter can be comprised in one word—'Self-government' or Swaraj, like that of the United Kingdom or the Colonies." This was the first time the demand for Swaraj was made from the Congress platform; it thrilled the audience and the whole country from end to end.

The Anglo-Indian newspapers, of course, did not like Dadabhai's speech: the unequivocal demand for Swaraj introduced into the political struggle a new element which spelt disaster for the European community, they thought. The Presidential address was, therefore, condemned as a surrender to the Extremists. In echoing the indignant outburst of that community, *The Times* (January 2nd, 1908) observed that the contention that the inhabitants of India were entitled to all the political rights, and franchises which the inhabitants of England enjoyed had no more root in history or in law than it had in common sense. "We have won India by the sword," it added, "and it is well for the small and highly-educated classes,

which are alone represented at the Congress, that the British sword stands between them and their native enemies. That is the fundamental fact in the whole situation which makes all claims for full self-government in India absurd".

The Moderates had made up their minds to defeat the aggressive programme of the New Party, which wanted the Congress to adopt it as its own and call on all the provincial Congress Committees to carry it out. Their vehement opposition led to violent scenes in the Subjects Committee when the Mehta group refused to extend the agitation officially all over India. The young Bengali leaders, Bipin Chandra Pal, Arabindo Ghose and others, walked out; G. K. Khaparde, the Berar leader and right-hand man of Tilak, went out with them. There was for a while some excitement in the Anglo-Indian camp at the prospect of a split in the Congress, but these hopes were soon disappointed when the Congress session began next day. It is true that there was heated discussion on the resolution, moved by Ambica Charan Muzumdar and seconded by Bipin Chandra Pal, that the boycott movement started in Bengal to protest against the partition of that province, "was, and is, legitimate". The Extremists interpreted the resolution in their own way and claimed that it applied to the whole country, while the Moderates interpreted it as confined to Bengal only.

That the split was avoided and a united front was presented was mainly due to the efforts of Tilak and his astute handling of the situation. S. K. Durani, an eye-witness, writes a behind-the-scenes story which merits quotation. He says: "Tilak allowed his followers to walk out, but he remained behind to watch to the end the proceedings of the Subjects Committee, which dispersed in the early hours of the next morning without coming to any decision. On his return to his residence Tilak retired and thought over the next move. He spent an hour or two and then prepared four separate resolutions on the subject of boycott. He sent two of them to the secretary of the Congress, Surendranath Bannerjee, one in the name of Khaparde and one in his own name; the other two he sent to Babu Motilal Ghose and Bipin Chandra Pal with a letter asking them to forward them immediately to the Congress secretary. We were all wondering what it was all about when Tilak said to Khaparde, 'I am sure Bannerjee will not accept any resolution from me or from Pal because we are Extremists. Mind my words, he will accept your

resolution or Ghose's!' In less than half an hour a messenger brought Tilak a letter from Bannerjee saying, 'We are prepared to accept the resolution of Khaparde or Ghose. Will you be good enough to withdraw yours and persuade Pal also to withdraw?' It was evident that Tilak had prepared his four resolutions in such a way that his own and that of Pal would appear to be strongly worded while the other two were couched in more conciliatory language, but in reality their meanings were the same. As expected by Tilak, the Moderates accepted those which were moderate in terms."[1] Supporting the Swadeshi resolution, Tilak said he was glad that they had arrived at a satisfactory solution, "because their Anglo-Indian friends had predicted that the twenty-second Congress would meet with premature death immediately after the attainment of the age of majority. The prediction however had been falsified under the able, impartial and judicious guidance of the veteran leader in the chair".

Tilak was pleased with the results of the Congress session. On his return from Calcutta he wrote in *Kesari* (January 8th, 1907) a most inspiring and stirring article—"The Achievements of the Last Congress Session"—and praised Dadabhai for giving a definite lead to the country and for lifting Indian politics out of the defeatist rut of begging for piecemeal reforms, and setting India once for all on the high road to Swaraj. In terms of Dadabhai Naoroji's presidential address he restated his faith and confidence in India's ultimate destiny of freedom. "Dadabhai, the venerable priest of patriotism," he wrote, "has joined in holy wedlock the National Congress and India's right of Swaraj. This marriage is not entirely approved by some of those who claim paternity of the Congress but now that the marriage is effected no one has the power to dissolve it or hinder its final consummation—the attainment of Swaraj. Day by day the country is accepting in growing measure the views and principles of the New Party which is a gratifying sign of our political progress which in the nature of things is inevitable."

Though the Moderates, in bringing in Dadabhai to forestall the capture of the Congress by the Extremists, succeeded so far as the presidential election itself was concerned, the whole atmosphere and working of the Congress of Calcutta was permeated and largely dominated by the spirit and programme of the New Party. Sir

[1] *Reminiscences and Anecdotes about Tilak*, edited by S. V. Bapat.

Pherogeshah Mehta felt particularly annoyed at this development. He was accustomed to commanding unanimity on any given issue with a mere shake of his finger or a nod of his head. In Calcutta he was faced with an organized and spirited opposition led by Tilak and his New Party. Unused to such treatment, he prepared to return to Bombay, fully determined to break up the New Party in the coming twelve months before the Congress assembled for its next annual session.

Mehta was a man of quick temper, and he showed his resentment at the New Party's success when he met Tilak and Gokhale on the eve of his departure from Calcutta. He said to Tilak, "I dare say you got the boycott resolution passed in Calcutta, but I assure you you would not have a chance to do it in Bombay". Quickly came the retort, "What of Bombay? I am prepared to take up your challenge and beard the lion in his den". (This was a reference to the people's name for Mehta—The Lion of Bombay). Gokhale interposed, and said: "No, Mr. Mehta, there is no forecasting the capacity of this man!"

This was a casual exchange, perhaps, a light-hearted talk between the two leaders, but it was also a pointer to the struggle for the capture of the Congress which was to develop in the next twelve months—a struggle which proved a great disaster for the premier organization of India and paralysed the political activity in the country for nearly nine years.

13

GATHERING OF THE STORM

Tilak returned from Calcutta with fire in his heart, and with plans to rouse the people to the gospel of Swaraj now firmly fixed as India's political goal by Dadabhai Naoroji, the faithful eighty-one-year-old servant of India. Tilak's industry was normally prodigious but "now it became stupendous", says one of his close associates. Gaikwar Wada, his Poona residence, became a hive of activity. He visualized the grand conception of developing the Swadeshi-Boycott programme into a gigantic movement of passive resistance to challenge the mighty British Raj with the democratic force of organized opinion in India, which, he foresaw, could be an even mightier force.

An earlier chapter spoke of the three-cornered fight Tilak had to wage throughout his life—war against the Government, war against the Moderates and war against the apathy of the people. Soon after the Calcutta Congress, the second of these three fronts engaged his immediate attention, for he was aware of the grudging manner in which the Moderates had supported the New Party's boycott resolution, and, also of their determination to water it down in the coming year.

The Moderates were always ready to bark at the British bureaucracy about poverty, pestilence, ignorance and even imperial exploitation; but they were not prepared to take the next step and bite the wrong-doer if it were necessary. Men like Gokhale, Madan Mohan Malaviya and Sir Pherozeshah Mehta made, on occasion, eloquent and fiery speeches, but their British listeners well knew that their fire did not burn; they flourished swords, but they had no edge on them. And how could the rulers take the Moderates seriously when they were convinced that the spiritual basis of these men's politics was a fulsome adoration of the British way of life, and above

all, a sincere belief that the British ruled India by Divine dispensation? Even a man like A. O. Hume, a life-long member of the Indian Civil Service and known for his moderation, advised the leaders of the Indian Congress to adopt a more vigorous policy. He told them that merely meeting once a year in the Christmas vacation, passing a few resolutions and sleeping over them for the rest of the twelve months would achieve nothing. He said, "You meet in Congress, you glow with a momentary enthusiasm, you speak much and eloquently; but the Congress closes and every one of you goes off straight away on his private business! Years ago I called on you to be up and doing; years ago I warned that 'Nations by themselves are made', and have you heeded these counsels? You have, indeed, ever eagerly clamoured for and vainly clutched at the Crown but how many of you will touch the Cross even with your finger-tips?"

This challenge, it should be remembered, was issued to the leaders of India by no less a person than the Father of the Congress. But the leaders who controlled the organization would not or could not take it up. Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, the "Lion of Bombay", spoke for the Moderate Party in words which he called "the confession of faith of a devout and irreclaimable Congressman". He said, "I am an inveterate. I am a robust optimist like Mahadeo Govind Ranade. I believe in divine guidance through human agency. . . . My steadfast loyalty (to the Crown) is founded upon this rock of hope and patience; seeking the Will of Providence, like Oliver Cromwell, in dispensations rather than revelations, seeing God's will like him in fulfilment of events. I accept British rule . . . as a dispensation so wonderful, a little island set at one end of the world establishing itself in a far continent as different as could be, that it would be folly not to accept it as a declaration of God's will."

Sir Pherozeshah Mehta was the high priest of the Moderate Party and Mr. Gokhale was his staunchest follower and henchman. Between them and Tilak there was hardly any common ground. Mehta and Gokhale regarded the conquest of India as God's will; Tilak regarded it as a curse. They welcomed the British rule; Tilak hated it. They wanted the Empire to last for ever; Tilak wished to see its end without delay. The Moderates were prepared to wait indefinitely for the attainment of their ideal, namely colonial self-government; the New Party, however, was impatient to reach

the goal of Swaraj, by which they meant complete independence. One would have thought that in the natural evolution of things, the Moderates, in response to the rising tempo of the movement, would slowly move nearer to the position of the New Party; after all both wings of the National Congress were agreed on the need for the salvation of India. But they were, unfortunately, widely separated in their approach to and treatment of the basic situation. The old methods of petitioning the bureaucracy or their masters in London had yielded little if anything by way of political rights. The 1892 Council's Act was trotted out by the Moderates as a great triumph for their constitutional agitation. But in reality what did it amount to? A few non-official members were nominated by the Governor of the province or the Viceroy of India after their so-called "election" through district boards and municipalities. The Governor had the right to reject the "elected member", and this effectively killed any idea of democratic franchise. Once elected a member could ask questions and make speeches but could neither ask supplementary questions nor criticize the budget. There are on record scores of members' questions which the Executive Member of the Government disposed of by the most expressive monosyllabic reply—"Yes" or "No". Many a time the popular members used to get so furious at this sort of treatment that they walked out.

Tilak, who was elected to the Bombay Council twice, once in 1895 and again in 1897, had first-hand experience of the way business was conducted there. He exposed the sham nature of these councils when five eminent members unanimously opposed a bill in 1904 and were rebuked by the Executive Members as men who did not know their own people. On another occasion Mehta had asked a question on a matter which was causing great inconvenience to the people. The Government reply was a plain "No". The popular members were stupefied by this ridiculous reply but could do nothing—they were debarred from asking a supplementary question or raising the issue again on a motion for the adjournment of the House.

Tilak was determined to expose the spinelessness of the Moderates and so prevent general acceptance of their ineffective political policy. Accordingly, early in 1907, he initiated an important public discussion on the vital issue of "Constitutional Agitation" in India.

The Moderates were doing all they could to prevent the country from following the lead given by Dadabhai Naoroji, and from supporting the Swadeshi-Boycott movement. In his own contribution, three articles on "Constitutional or extra-Constitutional agitation", Tilak dealt not only with the arguments the Moderates were already putting forward, but also with others which he thought they might bring out later to support their attitude. His articles (*Kesari*—February 12th, February 19th and March 5th, 1907) are a masterly exposition of the fundamentals of the politics of a conquered country, showing the vital difference between the concepts of legal and constitutional agitation and demonstrating how his programme of passive resistance or non-co-operation was the only one suitable to the conditions then prevailing in India.

In February 1907, Gokhale had delivered a series of lectures at Allahabad in which he put forward at some length his ideas on constitutional methods and by inference tried to show the futility of passive resistance as advocated by Tilak and his New Party. Gokhale had posed the question: "What is constitutional agitation?" and had answered it thus: "Constitutional agitation was agitation by methods which they were entitled to adopt to bring about the changes they desired through the action of constituted authority. Thus defined, the field of constitutional agitation was a very wide one. But there were two essential conditions—one, that the methods adopted were such as they were entitled to employ, and secondly, that the changes desired must be obtained only through the action of constituted authority by bringing to bear on them the pressure of public opinion." Mr. Gokhale next proceeded to point out that the loose talk in which some people indulged, namely, that constitutional agitation had failed in India, was unjustified.

Tilak in his article of February 12th boldly declared that "the Congress agitation based on the so-called 'constitutional methods' is a sheer waste of time. The continued stress laid on these methods has misled the country and wasted these valuable twenty-one years. We venture to suggest that although the word 'constitutional' has been paraded so often by our leaders, they have made the grievous mistake of misunderstanding its origin and application. Theirs is a case of following blindly the phraseology appropriate and applicable to English politics but totally inapplicable to Indian conditions. In England, an unpopular Act of the Government in power could be

repealed by the people's vote. The people have democratic means of changing the Government; the Government is answerable to the country and if it fails to convince the electors it stands condemned and is thrown out. Is there anything of the kind in India? Can Mr. Gokhale or his Moderate Party show us the constitution of India which could confer this right on the people?

"The Government of India is the creation of the British Parliament, and is theoretically responsible to that Parliament and not to the people of India. The naked truth of the Indian situation is that the right to punish anyone who goes against the Government of India rests with the Government, and the rules and regulations about it are to be found in the Indian Penal Code. In all seriousness one can suggest that what Mr. Gokhale calls India's Constitution is really the Indian Penal Code. If he had his Moderate friends suggest that our agitation should be within the four corners of that Code we can appreciate the argument—then it will mean that it should be legal and legitimate—that is perfectly understandable." No one for a moment suggested, Tilak asserted, that the Indian agitation should resort to arms or become illegal, but then "it would be more honest and realistic to ask the people to be legal in their agitation, the scope of which can be determined by circumstances, but it is futile and misleading to call it constitutional".

Tilak elaborated his views in the other two articles which can be summarized as follows. In the first place India had no Constitution of her own; the Indian Government was created by the Statutes of the Parliament of Great Britain and was not responsible to the people. Therefore the talk of bringing about constitutional changes through the action of the constituted authority was moonshine. In the second place the Indian people had no law-making powers. Government officials had the sole authority to make and unmake laws, and if they so desired could put an end to all forms of agitation and deprive the people of even their elementary rights of free association and free speech; they could easily penalize all political activity in the country. India's officialdom was an autocracy and in fighting such an autocracy it was not always possible to follow methods that would be described as legal; for such a description or interpretation was liable to be changed according to the whims of the bureaucracy. Tilak argued that not law but justice, morality, and equity should be the guiding principles of Indian agitation.

Constitutional and law-abiding methods against an alien bureaucracy which possessed almost absolute and autocratic power could only lead to political suicide.

These articles by Tilak furnished the *raison d'être* for the militant programme of the New Party and effectively squashed the arguments of the Moderate Party.

In reality the New Party (which came to be known as Extremists) and the Moderates differed little in their ideals; it was in the methods to be used in the day-to-day working of the political programme that the fundamental cleavage between them lay. At this time the well-known British author and journalist, H. W. Nevinson, was touring India and secured an interview with Tilak, a part of which is worth quoting as emphasising this difference in methods. He quotes Tilak thus: "It is not by our purpose, but by our methods only that our party has earned the name of Extremist. Certainly there is a very small party which talks about abolishing the British rule at once and completely. That does not concern us; it is much too far in the future. Unorganized, disarmed, and still disunited, we should not have a chance of shaking the British suzerainty. We may leave all that sort of thing to a distant time. Our object is to obtain eventually a large share in the administration of our country.

"What we aim at doing now is to bring pressure on the bureaucracy; to make it feel that all is not well. Of late the attitude of our British officials has greatly changed for the worse. They no longer speak of educating us up to freedom, as the great Englishmen like Elphinstone did in the past. They appear to agree with *The Times* that our education in subjects like English history must be checked, because it is dangerous for 'natives' to learn anything about freedom.

"The immediate question for us is, how are we to bring pressure on this bureaucracy, in which we have no effective representation, and are debarred from all except subordinate positions? It is only in our answer to that question that we differ from the so-called Moderates. They still hope to influence public opinion in England by sending deputations, supporting a newspaper, and pleading the justice of our cause. Both parties, of course, have long given up all hope of influencing Anglo-Indian opinion out here. But even in England we find most people ignorant and indifferent about India,

and the influence of retired Anglo-Indians at home is perpetually against us. When Lord Cromer said the other day that India must be no party question, he meant that Liberals should support the bureaucracy as blindly as the Tories. The history of the last year has proved to us how unexceptionably they fulfil that duty.

"Under these disappointments we Extremists have determined on other methods. It is a matter of temperament, and the younger men are with us. Our motto is 'Self-reliance, not Mendicancy'."

Then Tilak turned to the question of the New Party's programme. "Besides the ordinary Swadeshi movement," he said, "we work by boycott and passive resistance. Our boycott is voluntary. We do not advocate picketing or compulsory prevention from the purchase of foreign goods. And in passive resistance we shall simply refuse to notice such measures as the Seditious Meetings Act. But we do not care what happens to ourselves. We are devoted absolutely and without reservation to the cause of the Indian peoples. To imprison even 3,000 or 4,000 of us at the same time would embarrass the bureaucracy. That is our object—to attract the attention of England to our wrongs by diverting trade and obstructing the Government."

The New Party's conclusion that it was impossible to gain any concessions by petitions and prayers was the prime difference between the Moderates and Progressive parties. Tilak did not believe in philanthropy as a principle of British politics. "There was no instance in history," he said, "of one foreign nation ruling another for the benefit of the other and not for its own profit. The rule of one nation by another was in itself unnatural." He granted the efficiency of the British Government and the excellence of its methods for its own purpose, but these methods and that efficiency did not work for the interests of the people of the country. "A good foreign government was less desirable than an inferior native government," was his considered opinion.

The Moderates had always had faith in the British Government but very little faith in themselves and their own people in India. They believed that England's heart was good, sympathetic and generous, and that she meant to, and would, grant India self-government. This was not at all the New Party's belief. Tilak had said at Calcutta, "We believe in Lord Morley and in the genuineness of his professions as a philosopher. The old school (the Moderates)

thinks that politics could be governed by the dictates of philosophy; we hold that politics and philosophy are two different things and ought not to be mixed up together. The old school thinks that concessions could be secured by logical persuasion. We believe they can be won only by hard work and sacrifice!"

Tilak's exposition of the fundamental differences between his New Party and the Moderates attracted immediate attention all over the country. His succinctly expressed view that "India's only Constitution is the Penal Code" echoed through India. His articles were translated and published in Calcutta, Ahmedabad, Allahabad, Benares, Lahore and Madras and in many other towns, and special pamphlets were issued by his followers in various parts of the country.

Before the Moderates had time to recover from Tilak's attack on their ideals and methods of constitutional agitation he delivered another blow which knocked the bottom out of their political philosophy. Ever since the Congress was founded in 1885 (and even before) the old school had made Queen Victoria's Proclamation of 1858 the sheet-anchor of their political creed. Tilak also used to refer to it occasionally in order to prick the British conscience—but more often as a peg on which to hang his arguments than as an indication of his own faith in it. In June 1907, he gave his interpretation of the true meaning and purpose of the Proclamation, and this, like his exposition of "constitutional agitation" a few months earlier, shook the Moderates and the country.

Some time before this a private letter, written by Lord Lytton the Viceroy of India (1876–80) to the then Secretary of State for India, had come to light. In it he said that "claims and expectations of complete equality and admission to offices as promised by the Proclamation of 1858 never can be fulfilled. Governments of England and India appear unable to answer the charge of breaking to the heart the words of promise they have uttered to the ear". Lord Curzon for his part had also stated: "The highest ranks of civil employment in India must as a general rule be held by Englishmen, for the reason that they possess, partly by heredity, partly by upbringing, partly by education, the knowledge of the principles of government, the habits of mind, the vigour of character, which are essential for the task, and that, the rule of India being a British rule, and every other rule being under the circumstances of the case

impossible, the tone and standard should be set by those who have created and are responsible for it." This was the first direct contradiction to Queen Victoria's Proclamation which guaranteed equality of status to Indians in all branches of the administration. Such a statement not only added insult to injury but was a challenge to the intelligentsia of India. It is small wonder, then, that some of the educated Indians took up the challenge and began anti-British activities.

Tilak took full advantage of the fact that servants of the Crown, holding the highest positions, had expressed themselves in such terms about the Proclamation, and proceeded to put his own interpretation on it. He boldly declared that the 1858 declaration was, contrary to what many people thought, not a contract between the Sovereign and the subjects at all. "In my view," he said, "the Proclamation is not a contract but a statesmanly sop to pacify the people of India who had rebelled against the British—indeed it was a piece of cheating. Contracts are made between equals, not between the weak and the strong. Contractual relationship between the ruler and the ruled is a Western concept and is useful to give a practical basis to any government. . . . The King is divine, they say; all right, agreed! But I ask you, what are the subjects? Are they not divine? . . . Our ancient scriptures and law books accept the principle of the King's divinity but they do not allow him absolute and arbitrary powers. When the King's rule becomes unjust and oppressive he ceases to be divine. The moral of it all is that oppression and injustice cannot be justified even if the divinity of Kingship is accepted."

Then he went on to answer Anglo-Indian critics who had called the New Party revolutionaries: "It is true that what we seek may seem like a revolution; it is a revolution in the sense that it means a complete change in the theory of the government of India as now put forward by the bureaucracy. It is true that this revolution must be a bloodless revolution, but it would be folly to suppose that if there is to be no shedding of blood, there are also to be no sufferings to be undergone by the people. These sufferings are bound to be great and the sacrifices supreme. You can win nothing unless you are prepared to suffer and sacrifice. An appeal to the generosity and good feeling of the rulers has been found everywhere to have but narrow limits. Our demands and our intentions are legitimate;

they are constitutional and supported by history. They are also natural to human nature and, above all they are in accordance with God's will and creation."

While Tilak carried on his campaign against the "dependent philosophy and mendicant mentality of the Moderate Party", he never neglected the more dynamic aspect—fighting the people's apathy and indifference to their conquered status and poverty. He toured Maharashtra, besides visiting the provinces of Berar, Bengal, and the United Provinces, to rouse the people to boycott British goods and buy only Indian goods "even at a sacrifice". His speech at Pandharpur—one of the famous sacred places in Maharashtra—and another, addressed to the workers of Bombay, are particularly noteworthy. In them he expounded Swadeshi in the wider context of self-government. Swadeshi, he said, was a compound word—Swa means "my own" and Deshi means "belonging to country". His message, he explained, really meant that not only should the people buy home-made goods and boycott British goods but they should also demand a government of their own—a government by the people and for the people. "This subject of home-rule or Swaraj must be discussed from village to village," he told his audience. "The people must not keep quiet. All you people, workers and peasants, you must come forward boldly and declare that your condition under the present administration is most deplorable and unbearable. I know you have no weapons, but you do not need them; you have something else more powerful and effective than arms—it is the weapon of boycott. Refuse to buy British goods, and so teach them a lesson. And above all remember the country is ruled by the British because you co-operate with them. If you withhold your co-operation the administration must cease to function—I dare say it will collapse."

In his Bombay address to the workers he exhorted them not to allow themselves to be divided by the advice of self-interested people. "Do not heed those who tell you," he said, "that the Swadeshi movement is a sort of fad of the Brahmans; they tell you this to create caste hatred and differences amongst you. If you think for a moment, you will realize that the real benefactors of Swadeshi are yourselves, the workers in the country. Look at me. My clothes are of cloth made by you, the wages for which are earned by you, which means it is you who reap the direct benefit of the

Swadeshi movement. The true meaning of Swadeshi is that there should be more industries, more and prosperous industries, in our country, so that you people can get more and better jobs and wages."

This homely and direct way of explaining the basic ideas of the New Party brought thousands of people under Tilak's banner and the party's popularity, prestige and power grew enormously.

In Bombay Tilak set up the "Swadeshi co-operative stores" with the help of Sir Ratan Tata, Sir Manmohandas Ramji, and other influential Gujaratis, Bhatias and Marwaris. He also encouraged and gave a tremendous fillip to the Paisa Fund, a movement started in 1905 by a Mr. A. D. Kale. Tilak became its treasurer and he was proud to tell an audience in Bombay (February 10th, 1907) that the fund had risen from Rs.2,000 to Rs.8,000. Further research into the Indian glass industry and grants for technical study abroad by Indian students were two of the purposes for which the money was used. Financial help was also given to village weavers, and small cottage industries were promoted and encouraged. At the same time Tilak was also engaged in collecting funds towards the establishment of national schools, which he later developed into Samarth Vidalaya of Talegaon.

Tilak's campaign, urging the people to buy Indian-made goods, naturally led to the encouragement of Indian industries. In *The New Spirit in India* Nevinson records the spread of Swadeshi in the following words: "Such was the movement which I found speeding up the eighty or ninety cotton mills in Bombay, because work as they might, they could not keep pace with the demand from Bengal. . . . The movement was spreading to all kinds of merchandise besides cotton. In Calcutta they had started a Swadeshi match factory, in Dacca soap factory and tanneries. In all Indian towns you will now find Swadeshi shops where you may buy native biscuits, cigarettes, scents, toys, woollens, boots and all manner of things formerly imported. Nearly all the trade advertisements in Indian papers are now Swadeshi." The imports of British goods began to decline rapidly; during one month, May 1907, *The Times* of London reported, "Indian imports of Manchester piece goods declined by 42,492,500 yards".

Another important event of the year was the Indian visit of Keir Hardie, M.P., the founder of the Independent Labour Party. He came to Poona in October 1907, and was received by Tilak and

forty prominent citizens. He paid a special visit to the *Kesari* office and later attended a reception in his honour organized by the Sarvajanik Sabha, at which he was presented with an address. The tone and the language of the address bore the unmistakable imprint of Tilak's personality and became the subject of comment in newspapers. In the address Tilak requested Keir Hardie to use his influence to convince the British electorate of the justice of the Indian demands, but also pointed out that the "New Party is not going to depend any longer on the Liberals or other political parties in England to achieve its objective of Swaraj. India has now adopted a programme of self-reliance and is confident of reaching her goal." The guest was very pleased with this refreshing note of self-help which was something different from the addresses he had received in Calcutta and elsewhere. In reply Keir Hardie said, "My sympathies were always with India, but now they have grown a hundredfold. I will call a special conference of the Labour Party and tell them all about you and your condition." When he returned to London he particularly remembered his visit to Shivapuri and other villages near Poona, made in the company of Tilak and N. C. Kelkar, for there he was able to get into direct touch with the villagers and learn something about the poverty of the peasants under the British Raj. Another vivid memory which stayed with him was of the close watch kept on him in Poona by the C.I.D.; it so enraged him that he publicly threatened to expose these "un-British" methods on his return to England.

This contact which Tilak made, through its founder, with the Labour Party of Britain was maintained throughout his political career. Later when he visited England in 1918 the Labour Party was one of the political groups which offered its co-operation to him in his home-rule agitation.

The Moderates for their part were not sitting idle all this time. In their own way they were busy intriguing and manœuvring to find ways and means of undermining the growing influence of Tilak. They were thoroughly disturbed by his popularity and prestige and the power of his propaganda, and became more determined than ever to thwart him.

Their determination to keep the Congress aloof from the ideology of the New Party first became apparent at Surat where the Bombay

Provincial Conference was held at the end of March 1907, under the presidency of Sir Bhalachandra Krishna Bhatavadekar, a staunch Moderate and a blind follower of Mehta. His presidential speech was typical both in his servility to the Government and his resentment towards the New Party. He said, "Public workers must be honest; they must avoid ostentatiousness and devote themselves to truth. Petitions to the Government should be short and moderate in tone. The Government may be committing mistakes but they can be rectified only by rousing its sense of justice and sympathy. The present Government of India is liberal and reasonable. Not only this, but in my view, we can hardly expect a better government for many years to come. Our efforts must be persistent but we must not spoil our cause by impatience and extremism." And all this when the Government was busy furbishing its armoury of repressive measures! Sir Bhalachandra refused to allow resolutions on Swadeshi and boycott to be moved and in justification of his action he said that an industrial and not a Provincial conference was the proper place for such resolutions.

Opposition to the New Party and its programme was shown at other conferences held under Moderate leadership. At Raipur, at the Provincial Conference of Nagpur and Berar, Rao Bahadur Mudholakar, the president, refused to allow the singing of "Vande Mataram", a Bengali song which had attained the status of India's national anthem. The slogan "Moderation is our Motto" greeted the delegates as they entered the conference hall.

There was heated discussion on the resolutions for Swadeshi and boycott, but here again the President disallowed the resolutions. At the United Provinces Provincial Conference, held at Allahabad under Pandit Malaviya, the two parties again clashed. After the president had stopped two hundred delegates of the New Party from attending, the "rump" conference passed a few ineffectual resolutions. The conference itself was attended by a mere few score of delegates, but outside the hall Lajpat Rai, one of the leaders of the New Party, was able to draw audiences of ten thousand and more people. What was true of this conference was also true of conferences in Bengal and other provinces. The popular support was unmistakably for the New Party's programme which reflected the fighting spirit of the people. By contrast the speeches, the attitude and the resolutions of the Moderate Party were so mild and

uninspiring that they could hardly claim to represent anybody except themselves.

It was in this atmosphere of psychological conflict and rebellion that the next annual session of the Congress was held in Surat—a session which was to prove a disaster and a calamity to the Indian national movement.

14

THE SURAT SPLIT

I. THE BATTLE OF IDEAS

We have seen in the previous chapter how the Moderates, smarting under the New Party's success in Calcutta, frantically tried to recover the lost ground by boycotting the "boycott" resolution in the various provincial conferences. They were particularly piqued by the dig at them by *The Times* (January 2nd, 1907) that the "threatened split between the Extremists—the professed enemies of British rule—and the Moderates has been averted, but averted by the adoption of no small part of the Extremist policy". This was no doubt a taunt at the Mehtas and Gokhales of the Congress who, according to *The Times*, had not shown enough courage to stand up to the pressure of the Extremists. In a subtle manner the newspaper also tried to intimidate the Moderates by pointing to the fate which would await them if they followed the Extremist lead on the boycott issue: "The Congress . . . adopted by resolution the President's condemnation of the partition of Bengal and declared that 'boycotting' was and is a legitimate weapon—a conclusion from which they may find that the courts of law differ." This was too obvious a threat for any Moderate to ignore and from the appearance of this article in *The Times* dated their strenuous opposition to the idea of boycotting British goods, and the specious arguments they employed to justify their action. They were most anxious to put themselves right in the eyes of Printing House Square, and their efforts in the twelve months before the Congress met at Surat were directed towards showing that they had not sold their souls to their opponents. It was, in fact, through their attempt to get the Calcutta resolutions on Swadeshi, Boycott and National Education modified to suit their interpretation of them that the Surat Congress broke down.

Before describing the events of the Congress session and attempting to apportion blame for its failure, it will not be out of place to examine the circumstances which brought the Congress to Surat, since they throw a significant light on the causes of the Congress fiasco.

At the end of the Calcutta session the delegation from the Central Provinces gave an invitation to the Congress to hold the next annual session at Nagpur. This invitation was formally accepted. It was also agreed in the tentative constitution passed in the Calcutta session that the following year's president should be elcted by the local Reception Committee on a three-fourths majority. The Nationalist leaders of the province, G. S. Khaparde, Dr. B. S. Moonje and Alekar thought this was a good opportunity to have Tilak as president. They put forward his name and met with a warm response, not only from their own province, but also from Bengal, Madras and the Punjab. In their enthusiasm they collected Rs.40,000 and enrolled 1,600 members for the Reception Committee. The possibility that Tilak might capture the Congress alarmed the Moderates who were not able to collect more than Rs.20,000 and about 800 members. But by the end of September of that year it was obvious that neither party would be in a position to have its own way. Although the Nationalists were in a majority, they were not in a position to command the three-fourths vote required to elect the president of their choice. Nor, of course, with their much smaller membership, could the Moderates.

A reasonable compromise might have been arrived at, but the local Moderate Party made the strange decision to reorganize the executive body of the Provincial Congress Committee and eliminate the Nationalist element altogether. In the hope that he could present them with a *fait accompli* after a "public" meeting of his own followers, Gangadhar rao Chitanwis (later Sir Gangadhar Chitanwis) held a meeting in the Town Hall of Nagpur without giving proper notice to the Nationalists. When they learnt of this move, they decided to attend the meeting in force, but were refused admission by Chitanwis' men and some rowdyism resulted. Chitanwis was forced to admit that the meeting "was irregularly called" and the incident was allowed to end there.

Yet the main issue—the election of an acceptable President for a Congress which was to be held at Nagpur—still remained unresolved.

To break the deadlock, Tilak offered to stand down and advised his followers publicly through *Kesari* (October 29th, 1907) that "if the Moderates are not agreeable to any compromise the Nationalist Party should inform the All-Indian Congress Committee to that effect and voluntarily withdraw from the Reception Committee". An emergency meeting was called in Bombay by Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, at which he revealed his true attitude of mind. He expressed his unqualified opposition to Tilak and naïvely asked Dr. Moonje, 'Why must you insist on electing Tilak for the presidency in preference to Dr. Rash Behari Ghose?" He received the blunt answer he deserved; the doctor replied, "Mehtaji, that's our look-out. You have no right to impose a president on the Reception Committee". Moonje also made it clear that if the Nationalists failed to secure Tilak's election, they would accept Mehta's choice.

After this, the Nagpur Moderates frankly admitted their inability to stage the Congress. Mehta welcomed this decision, and when an invitation from the Surat Moderates (a move pre-arranged by him) reached the All-India Congress Committee (packed with Mehta's men), it was accepted with alacrity. This "spontaneous invitation", which was hailed by the Moderates as a "gallant gesture on the part of the Surat leaders", was too transparent a move to deceive anyone except those who wanted to be deceived.

That is how the annual session of the Congress came to be held in Surat, which the Moderates regarded as a safe haven.

By this time, to avoid becoming the centre of controversy, Tilak had withdrawn from the Presidential contest but had suggested the name of Lajpat Rai, who had been so unjustly treated by Government officials. He argued that in a struggle for political emancipation the man who has incurred the greatest degree of Government displeasure is the proper person to represent the people's cause. By honouring him, India would be proclaiming to the world her faith and confidence in the man and the ideals he stood for. The Moderates failed to see the logic of this argument, yet they could not openly oppose Lala's nomination. Thereupon the Moderate leader, Mr. Gokhale, on the advice of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, put about the idea that at the coming session the Congress wanted to condemn as strongly as possible the unjust deportation of Lalaji and to avoid embarrassment to the great patriot, it would be wiser to elect

somebody from Bengal, who could speak out the nation's mind in unmistakable terms. This argument failed to dissuade the young Nationalists from their choice, for they argued that "the mere election of Lalaji was equal to passing a hundred protest resolutions".

This was too much for Gokhale, who came out with the real reason for his opposition to Lalaji's election. "This is not the time," he said, "to irritate the Government by electing Lajpat Rai. In their wrath they will crush our movement in a moment." This was disappointing enough, but to add insult to injury, Ambalal Sakarlal, one of Mehta's henchmen, and the most influential member of the Surat reception committee, went even further by saying, "Why do you want to disgrace Lalaji's name by proposing him for the presidential chair? You know the All-India Congress Committee is in our pocket". This was a plain hint to the Nationalists that the Moderates had made up their minds against Lajpat Rai and that no amount of argument would alter their decision. In a fit of anger the Nationalists left the meeting, an act which was probably welcome to Gokhale and his friends, who, taking advantage of their absence, proposed Dr. Rash Bihari Ghose for President. Needless to say, the Committee passed the motion unanimously.

Such was the explosive atmosphere in the country when the Congress delegates assembled at Surat. Tilak had arrived a week earlier, accompanied by his trusted friend Khaparde, who was particularly useful as he had a good command of Gujarati and could deliver effective speeches in that language. The Moderates had their reasons for choosing Surat for that year's session. With the help of the influential local leader, Ambalal Sakarlal, they had rigged the local Congress organization to such an extent that they felt confident they would be able to defeat Tilak and his New Party once and for all. Naturally, then, the local Congress Committee had made no special arrangements to receive Tilak or any other important members of his party, even though it was usual for the local Congress organization to give a ceremonial reception to important leaders arriving for the meeting. Fortunately, the Surat group of Tilak's party had come to know in advance of Sakarlal's plans to ignore the Nationalist leaders, and therefore on its own responsibility arranged to give Tilak a rousing reception. Thousands of people waited at the railway station to greet him and his party, and through the

decorated streets of the city a great procession went to meet him, headed by gaily attired cavalrymen—perhaps to remind the people of the great tradition of the Mahratta hero, Shivaji.

Tilak told the vast crowd, "I have come with no desire to split the Congress, nor do I wish to quarrel with the Moderates. In point of fact, what can we achieve by breaking up the Congress? What purpose can we serve by forming a separate organization? We only insist on sticking to the resolutions passed in the Calcutta Congress last year. We are determined not to allow the Congress to go back on its accepted programme. We have raised the banner of the New Party, whose aim is not to harm the National Congress, but to make it stronger and firmer in its fight against bureaucracy. Those who hold the reins of power in the Congress have shown, by their attitude on more than one occasion, that they intend to sabotage the four-fold programme of the Calcutta session. This must not be allowed to happen and I appeal to the people of Surat to help me in averting this calamity."

Next day Lala Lajpat Rai reached Surat and was also given a great welcome by the citizens, for he was the hero of the hour, as he had just been repatriated from Burma after unwarranted deportation and imprisonment. By their spontaneous welcome, the citizens of Surat were demonstrating their approval of his courageous stand against the Government and by implication were condemning the Moderate Party's opposition to his election to the presidentship. The growing popularity of the Extremist leaders was further demonstrated when the president-elect, Dr. Ghose, arrived. By contrast his welcome was rather quiet, even though it had been arranged by the Reception Committee.

As the Extremists and the Moderates faced each other things began to happen with unexpected speed. Under the presidency of Arabindo Ghose the Nationalists met in conference on the eve of the Congress session and decided to fight against any withdrawal from the policy and resolutions passed by the Calcutta Congress. A letter was sent to the secretaries of the Congress asking them to make arrangements to divide the house if necessary on all important issues. The Reception Committee published a note in the Press stating that the rumour that resolutions relating to self-government, boycott and national education had been omitted from the agenda was wholly unfounded. On the morning of the 25th Tilak obtained a copy of

the draft of the Congress Constitution which had been prepared by Gokhale. In it the object of the Congress was stated in these terms: "The Indian National Congress has, for its ultimate goal, the attainment by India of self-government similar to that enjoyed by other members of the British Empire." There were other features in this draft constitution which, if their acceptance were made obligatory, would exclude the Nationalists from the Congress. Tilak and his party decided to launch a strong protest against all these points.

At this stage Lala Lajpat Rai proposed a small conference of members of all parties to discuss controversial questions and try to arrive at a compromise. Tilak agreed to take part but received no information about the proposed conference until the next morning. In the meantime Tilak and Khaparde met Surendranath Bannerjee and told him they would withdraw all opposition if the Nationalist Party was assured that its status at the session would not be attacked and if, when the resolution on the election of the president was discussed, some graceful reference was made to the public's desire to have Lala Lajpat Rai in the chair. This condition Bannerjee accepted as he himself was to speak on the resolution formally proposing the president, but he could give no assurance as to the first condition. Tilak tried to see Mr. Malvi, chairman of the Reception Committee, but, whatever the reason—whether Malvi was unwilling to see him or in fact could not find the time—he failed. He asked for a copy of the draft resolution, which was supplied to him at 2.30 p.m. on the 26th, though the reporter of an Anglo-Indian newspaper, the *Advocate of India*, had received it the previous day and published it. All this was naturally very exasperating to the Nationalist Party, and Tilak foresaw that it would be his unpleasant duty to follow a course of opposition from the very beginning of the session.

The Congress met on December 26th, 1907, and the pendal, holding seven thousand people, was packed. The chairman of the Reception Committee, Tribhuvan Das Malvi, welcomed the delegates in a short speech and called upon Dewan Bahadur Ambalal S. Desai to propose the name of Dr. Rash Behari Ghose as president. Next came Surendranath Bannerjee, but he was shouted down and a great commotion broke out in the pendal; after all attempts on the part of Mr. Malvi had failed to restore order, the session was adjourned for the day.

With the adjournment of the session the atmosphere became tense and rumours of all kinds began to circulate; talk of a compromise and the possibility of a breakdown were discussed endlessly in the two camps. Meanwhile go-betweens hurried from Gokhale to Tilak and from Tilak to Gokhale with messages and suggestions. No one slept that night. Chunilal Saraya, vice-chairman of the Reception Committee, called on Tilak to find out if he would agree to meet Gokhale that night. Tilak not only agreed but added that he would "attend the meeting at any hour of the night". Gokhale was less accommodating; in spite of Mr. Saraya's pleas he refused to meet Tilak. The next morning Saraya again met Tilak and proposed that, with Khaparde, he should meet Dr. Rutherford, M.P., (who was attending the Congress session) in Professor Gajjar's bungalow where the doctor was supposed to be arranging for a reconciliation meeting. Tilak and his companions went, but Dr. Rutherford failed to arrive.

Undismayed, Tilak now proposed that the election of the president should be postponed for a time and that a committee, made up of one Moderate and one Nationalist representative from each province should settle the differences. Gajjar and Saraya undertook to convey this proposal to Sir Pherozeshah Mehta but this, too, came to nothing. Having tried all means to bring about a compromise, Tilak sent a note to Mr. Malvi which read: "Sir, I wish to address the delegates on the proposal for the election of the president after it is seconded. I wish to move an adjournment with a constructive proposal. Please announce me. Yours sincerely, B. G. Tilak, Deccan delegate (Poona)." Malvi did not even condescend to acknowledge it.

The adjourned meeting of the Congress began at 1 p.m. on December 27th, and Surendranath Bannerjee resumed his speech. This time he was given a patient hearing and everyone thought the quarrels were over, and that the Congress would now go smoothly. As the speaker was returning to his seat Tilak sent a reminder to Malvi repeating his request, but Malvi still remained silent. Realizing that his request was being completely ignored, Tilak now stepped up on to the platform. In the meantime Dr. Ghose had taken his place in the president's chair, so suggesting that the motion of election had been passed and that the business of the house was under his control. He asked Tilak to return to his place. But Tilak

insisted on his right to address the delegates and told Dr. Ghose that he had not been properly elected. This contention was ruled out of order both by the Chairman of the Reception Committee and by the President. Tilak still refused to leave the platform and turned to the delegates to make his appeal to them. Young Moderate volunteers sprang from both sides of him to pull him down by main force, but Gokhale intervened and stopped them. He threw out both arms to protect Tilak, who stood facing the audience with folded arms, unmoved and defiant. Suddenly a Mahratta shoe came hurtling through the air and hit Surendranath Bannerjee and Pherozeshah Mehta. This was the signal for pandemonium; men rushed about yelling with fury and brandishing long sticks which they brought down on anyone within range. At this stage Dr. Ghose suspended the proceedings *sine die*. The experienced observer H. W. Nevinson reports, "The Indian ladies vanished. The platform leaders withdrew rapidly through a door at the back of the pendal. Mr. Tilak was borne off by his followers. But in the pendal raged a tumult and a bloody riot. Chairs flew as missiles, long sticks clashed and shivered; blood flowed from broken heads. Friends and foes were indistinguishable and received blows impartially. Ultimately the police entered and cleared the pendal. Within an hour the vast pendal, strewn with broken chairs, sticks and rags of raiments, stood empty as a banquet hall deserted."

December 27th marked the blackest day in the annals of the Congress. The political status and prestige built up over a period of twenty-two years by the unremitting toil of hundreds of leaders and workers vanished overnight. In sorrow and fear every one was asking, What will happen now? But few could give a confident answer. The prospect of a void in the political life of the country frightened the Extremists and the Moderates alike.

The leaders of the two parties met in the evening to take stock and see how the situation could best be retrieved. The Moderates decided to hold a Convention of their followers on the following day, and issued a notice Only those would be allowed to attend who were prepared to pledge themselves, in writing, to certain aims and objects, which were: "The attainment by India of self-government similar to that enjoyed by the self-governing members of the British Empire, and participation by her in the rights and responsibilities of the Empire on equal terms with those members in the goal of our

political aspirations; that the advance towards this goal is to be by strictly constitutional means, by bringing about a steady reform of the existing system of administration, and by promoting National Unity, fostering public spirit, and improving the condition of the masses; and that all meetings held for the promotion of the aims and objects above indicated have to be conducted in an orderly manner, with due submission to the authority of those that are entrusted with the power to control their procedure, and they are requested to attend at 1 p.m. on Saturday, December 28th, 1907, in the pendal lent for the purpose by the Working Committee of the Reception Committee of the twenty-third Indian National Congress."

This notice was signed by Dr. Ghose, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, Mr. Bannerjee, Mr. Gokhale, and Madame Mohan Malaviya, among others.

Although the Moderates were going ahead with their plans without any effort at reconciliation, there were a few leaders, among them Motilal Ghose, A. C. Mitra, Lala Harkisen Lal and B. C. Chatterjee, who were anxious for a compromise which could allow the Congress session to reassemble in a day or two. They had prolonged discussions with Tilak on the night of the 27th and the morning of the 28th and were able to secure from him a written assurance in the form of a letter:

Surat, December 28th, 1907.

"Dear Sirs: With reference to our conversation and principally in the best interests of the Congress, my party and I are prepared to waive our opposition to the election of Dr. Rash Behari Ghose as President of the twenty-third Indian National Congress, and we are prepared to act in the spirit of forget and forgive provided, firstly, last year's resolutions on Swaraj, Swadeshi, Boycott and National Education are adhered to and each expressly reaffirmed, and, secondly, such passages, if any, in Dr. Ghose's speech as may be offensive to the Nationalist Party, are omitted. Yours, etc.,

"B. G. Tilak."

The Moderates ignored this reconciliation move and went ahead with their convention. This last attempt by the Nationalists to avoid the final break-up of the Congress and its rejection by the Moderates proved beyond doubt that there existed between the two parties no common ground on which to work.

So ended the twenty-third Indian National Congress, leaving

behind it a void in the national life of India and two parties more embittered and estranged than ever. And in the background the Government was about to show its hand by inaugurating a regime of repression which in turn would give birth to terrorist activity in India. The Surat split was to have repercussions on a much wider scale than either of the political parties realized at that time.

II. THE GUILTY PARTY?

Whose fault was it that the Surat Congress broke down? The question has been debated in India ever since 1907. There are three main versions of this controversy available to assess the situation: the Extremist statement, which is signed by B. G. Tilak, G. S. Khaparde, Arabindo Ghose, H. Mookerji and D. C. Chatterjee; G. K. Gokhale's rejoinder in his capacity as general secretary, which gives the Moderate version; and the account supplied by Mr. Nevinson in his *New Spirit in India.* In addition there are also books and articles by writers and publicists of the time who, though not themselves actors in these events, had a good knowledge of them.

As Tilak was the focal point of the storm, many contemporary writers like Babu Ambika Charan Muzumdar and Sir H. P. Mody—not to mention the avowed anti-Tilak British writers like Sir Valentine Chirol—have condemned Tilak and held him responsible. But their treatment of this affair obviously suffers both from partisanship and from the influence of the environment in which they wrote. They are apologists of Mehta and consequently eager to justify or gloss over all his "unconstitutional" acts, as well as those of his Moderate Party.

The Times of London, as was to be expected, fastened the blame for the Surat split entirely on Tilak. It wrote (December 30th, 1907):

"Out of the strife there emerges for once the ominous figure of Mr. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who has long been—but usually in the background—the organizer and leader of the Extremist section. It was Mr. Tilak's appearance on the platform which was the signal for the charge which wrecked the Congress. Mr. Tilak is a political enigma, even in a country where politics are often the queerest jumble of ideas. A Mahratta Brahmin of scholarly attainments, he long ago suffered a term of imprisonment for inciting to disaffection.

He is feared and distrusted by nearly all sections of Indian political opinion, yet he contrives to hold his own, to enlist the aid of large numbers of followers, and to foment agitation. He seems to have no political principles, but to aim at destruction pure and simple. If he could not control the Congress, he was determined to destroy it; and for the time being he has attained his unworthy object." *The Times* adds, "One turbulent spirit, bursting through all restraints, has brought about its temporary downfall".

Referring to the Surat episode, Sir Valentine Chirol in his book *Indian Unrest* states without qualification that "Tilak and his friends wrecked that session of the Congress amidst scenes of disgraceful riot and confusion".

In favour of Mr. Nevinson it can be said that he was an experienced observer and undoubtedly a man of integrity and liberal sympathies. But he was primarily an outsider, a spectator. It is true that his help was sought by both wings of the Congress in their efforts to arrive at a compromise; he was not, however, in a position to know and appreciate the many undercurrents, both psychological and personal, at work in Indian politics at that time which, when they eventually came to the surface, ended in the tragedy of Surat.

There remain the official statements of the two parties, and in our view they furnish enough and sufficiently reliable material for an objective appraisal of the situation without recourse to the views of men who were commentators only.

The statement issued on December 31st, 1907, by Tilak and his colleagues in the Nationalist Party recounts certain facts which led to the break-up and offers point-by-point criticism of the Moderates' attitude and actions. The principal points the statement emphasizes are:

(1) Dr. Rash Behari Ghose's election was cleverly manoeuvred, "brushing aside the proposal for the nomination of Lala Lajpat Rai . . . on the ground that 'we cannot afford to flout the Government at this stage; the authorities would throttle our movement in no time'".

(2) The draft resolutions were not available until "2.30 p.m. on Thursday, December 26th, that is to say, till the actual commencement of the Congress session". A week or ten days earlier "a list of the headings of the subjects likely to be taken up was officially published, but this list did not include the subjects of self-government,

boycott and national education, on all of which *distinct and separate* resolutions were passed at Calcutta last year".

(3) "This omission naturally strengthened the suspicion that the Bombay Moderates really intended to go back" on the position taken at Calcutta.

(4) A conference of about 500 nationalists, presided over by Arabindo Ghose, resolved "to prevent the attempted backsliding of the Congress by all constitutional means, even by opposing the election of the President and wrote a letter to the Congress secretaries requesting them to make arrangements for dividing the house, if need be, on every contested proposition including that of the election of the president".

(5) The draft constitution prepared by Mr. Gokhale stated: "The Indian National Congress has for its ultimate goal the attainment by India of self-government similar to that enjoyed by the other members of the British Empire." This "was a direct attempt to tamper with the ideal of self-government on the lines of the *self-governing* colonies as settled in Calcutta and to exclude the Nationalists from the Congress by making the acceptance of this new creed an indispensable condition of Congress membership".

(6) If the Nationalists "were assured that no backsliding by Congress would be attempted, the opposition to the election of the President would be withdrawn".

(7) The Surat Reception Committee, composed of Moderates, had made arrangements the previous night to dismiss the Nationalist volunteers and to hire Bohrah or Mohammedan Goondas (hooligans) for the day. These, with lathis, were stationed at various places in the pendal (pavilion) . . . and "took part in the scuffle on behalf of their masters."

(8) It was entirely "misleading and unfounded" to say, as the official Congress statement said, that Tilak wanted to move an adjournment of the whole Congress; "What he demanded, by way of amendment, was an adjournment of the business of the election of the President in order to have the differences settled by a Joint Conciliatory Committee of the leading delegates from both sides."

The statement goes on to compare and contrast the text of the Calcutta resolutions with the draft resolutions for the Surat session, and tries to prove that the Moderates were trying to withdraw from the forward position taken at Calcutta.

G. K. Gokhale's rejoinder, issued from Calcutta on January 13th, 1908, runs into 4,500 words and attempts to answer, with a wealth of detail, the charges and criticisms of the Nationalists. It is to the credit of Gokhale that he does not try to hide the fundamental fact in this controversy, namely, that the position the Moderate Party was forced to take and defend was politically weak and morally untenable. He seems to be conscious all the time of the basic strength of the Nationalist argument and the weakness of his defence. He restates his Party's reasons for opposing the election of Lala Lajpat Rai, but admits the general truth of the Nationalist charge that he had said he was afraid the Congress might be throttled by the Government in five minutes. In reply to the statement that the draft resolutions were not available to the delegates until the actual commencement of the Congress session on December 26th, he pleads overwork and lack of co-operation from the Reception Committee. He admits he could not do full justice to the drafting of the resolutions as there were "a thousand things to distract one's attention". To justify or rather to rationalize his failure to make the draft resolutions available earlier Gokhale has no better argument than to say that "though the draft resolutions have in previous years been published beforehand . . . it is not true that they have *always* been so published". In passing one should note that the grievance of the Nationalist Party on this point had been ventilated and debated in the public Press for more than four weeks before the Congress.

Mr. Gokhale's explanation of the difference in wording of the Calcutta resolutions on self-government, Swadeshi, Boycott and National Education is most unconvincing. As to the Swadeshi resolution, Gokhale admits that the words "even at some sacrifice" were left out of the draft resolution, but he attributes this to the faulty reproduction of the resolution in the journal *India* (published in London) which was the only paper available to him for reference. In the resolution on boycott the changes made are described by Gokhale as "verbal alterations" and he justifies this on the ground that Tilak's interpretation of the original Calcutta resolution, which contained the words "the boycott movement inaugurated in Bengal", was "unfair and unjustifiable". Of the resolution on National Education he says, "the slight alteration made was only with the object of improving the phraseology without altering the meaning in any way".

Lastly, Gokhale replied to the objections raised by the Nationalists about the ultimate political goal of India. Here again, he admits that the words "self-government enjoyed by the self-governing members of the British Empire" in the original resolution, were changed to "self-government enjoyed by other members of the British Empire" because of Tilak's interpretation. But Gokhale fails to say why it should be necessary to make the acceptance of this wording obligatory for each and every person who wished to be a member of the Congress.

Gokhale's explanation of the various points of criticism made by Tilak seemed neither convincing nor fair to his political opponents. By declaring self-government similar to that enjoyed by the self-governing members of the British Empire the ultimate goal of India's political destiny, Gokhale was suggesting that it was a goal beyond the scope of practical politics. The same view was expressed by Sir Pherozeshah Mehta in his interview with the correspondent of the *Times of India* published in that newspaper on December 30th, 1907. According to this new creed, the reform of the existing system of administration, and not its gradual replacement by a popular and responsible system, was to be the immediate object of the Congress; furthermore, no one who did not accept this as the indispensable creed was to be a member of any of the Congress organizations after 1907. This was the chief retrogressive feature which Sir Pherozeshah Mehta and his party wanted to carry out.

It was not surprising therefore that Tilak took great exception to this unwarranted tampering with the Calcutta resolution on self-government, and charged Gokhale and his party with attempting to convert the Indian National Congress into a party organization. Tilak and his Nationalist Party were not prepared to put any limits on the aspirations of the people or their ultimate political goal. More than once he himself had construed Swaraj or self-government as complete independence—an independent sovereign republic of India; to accept self-government of the colonial type would have been fatal, Tilak thought, for the political emancipation of the country.

From this review of the controversy it seems reasonable to conclude that, although the Nationalist Party could be blamed for its exhibition of impatience, it is nevertheless true to say that it represented and expressed the views and aspirations of the vast majority in the

country. Men like Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal, who moved amongst the masses, were undoubtedly in a far better position to know and express the sentiment of the people than Gokhale or Mehta who hardly ever attempted to mix with the masses.

There is likewise little doubt that if the membership and management of the Congress had been based on a more popular and democratic constitution the Moderates would have had no chance of a majority in the organization. Indeed, their frantic efforts to hold on to the machinery of the Congress and to control its working showed that they were themselves aware of this fundamental weakness in their position.

In the Nationalist Party the Moderates had come up against a new force in politics at the head of which stood Tilak, supported by Lajpat Rai, Khaparde, Arabindo Ghose, Bipin Chandra Pal and a band of devoted followers. To Mehta and Gokhale he was a dreaded opponent whom they could neither convert nor crush. There was little hope therefore that the two parties could ever evolve a common programme. At the same time the Nationalists did not wish to see the Congress founder on account of differences, which, as Tilak wrote in *Kesari*, "can only benefit the enemy, who will exploit them to the full to crush the Nationalist movement first and then turn to the so-called Moderates". That was why he refused to listen to Arabindo Ghose and many of his less mature followers when they advised him to hold a separate Congress of his Party. He wanted the Congress to maintain a united front and work on democratic lines on the model of the British Parliament, where the Party with a majority rules but must give way to its opponents if defeated in a general election. Not only had Tilak faith in his programme; he had faith in winning a majority in the Congress.

Sir Pherozeshah Mehta and Gokhale were not prepared to follow this democratic line; they knew what their fate would be if they were to cross swords with their opponents. They therefore became the self-appointed protectors of the organization and decided to revive the Congress the next year without the Nationalists. To them control of the Congress was a more important prize than national unity.

If the Nationalist Party is to be blamed for its impatience, at the same time it must be admitted that the Moderates had become a party of immobility, incapable of moving with the times and of understanding the people's aspirations.

They therefore created a situation in which the Nationalists were bound to react as they did. In no other way can we explain the strange and unconstitutional behaviour of Tribhuvan Das Malvi, the chairman of the Reception Committee, in ignoring the repeated requests of Tilak to be given leave to address the delegates. In the letter sent to the secretaries of the Congress the day before the session began the Nationalist Party had made no secret of its attitude. Why was no attempt made by Mehta or Malvi to meet the Nationalist leaders and clear up the position? Again, was it in accordance with democratic practice to ignore an avowed opposition party and declare the president elected without giving a chance to the opposition to express its opinion? In such a situation as at Surat the proper course for Mr. Malvi was to leave the matter in the hands of the house by allowing Tilak to address it. He had no right to gag any speaker, even if he had risen to speak without giving prior notice. Tilak, as we have seen, had given written notice more than once of his desire to speak; therefore Mr. Malvi and Dr. Ghose had no right to stop him from appealing to the general members of the Congress.

The law, practice and convention regarding the conduct of public meetings, based on the rules followed by the House of Commons, were entirely on the side of Tilak. Sir Erskine May, the greatest authority on Parliamentary law and practice, has stated unequivocably that "the ultimate authority upon all points is the House itself". The views of Dr. Smith, the author of *A Handbook of Law and Practice of Public Meetings*, are particularly relevant in this connection. He says, "Sometimes, particularly at meetings where the Chairman and the party appointing him are anxious to have a certain resolution carried, and wish to remove every opportunity for opposition to it, the Chairman will insist upon putting it to the vote the moment it is moved and seconded; and although some member claims to be heard before the votes are taken, the Chairman goes on taking the votes, and then tells the member that the question is now decided, and he cannot speak to it because it is not before the meeting. In such a case the member should, of course, endeavour to attract the Chairman's attention in a way which the latter cannot ignore, and may then proceed to speak in spite of the Chairman."

Thus ended the first chapter in the history of the Indian National Congress. An objective consideration of all the facts and arguments makes it impossible to resist the conclusion that the Surat split was

inevitable. The differences between the Moderate and Nationalist parties made the rupture unavoidable. The Nationalists, through their contact with the people and their understanding of their hopes and aspirations, were convinced that theirs was the only possible course to follow. Youth and enthusiasm, coupled with indifference to danger and readiness to sacrifice themselves, gave them strength. The Moderates, on the other hand, were equally determined to cling to the old path which they had so long and so perseveringly trodden, the path of petitioning the conscience of the British. In a word, the Moderates believed in reforms, the Nationalists in revolution.

15

THE FIRST BOMB

The powerful agitation against the Partition of Bengal had thrown up many able and aggressive leaders of this type in Bengal, but the real symbol of the new age was Bal Gangadhar Tilak from Maharashtra.

PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU:
The Discovery of India

The seven months between the Surat Congress and Tilak's second trial for sedition were marked by intense political activity to which the Government reacted with strong repression. This in turn led to the rise of an Indian terrorist party which brought to India for the first time the cult of the bomb and political murder. On April 30th a picric acid bomb intended for Mr. Kingsford, Sessions Judge at Muzufferpore, misfired and killed Mrs. Kennedy and her daughter. This unfortunate incident was to lead to repression and the enactment of a series of coercive measures, and to make Tilak the storm-centre of a state trial.

Immediately on his return to Poona, Tilak decided to start a Mahrathi daily in Bombay whose purpose would be, in general, to publicize the programme of the New Party and in particular to advocate, in the immediate context of political developments after Surat, the necessity for a compromise acceptable to all parties which would lead to a united Congress. There were daily newspapers in English and Gujarathi, but there was none in Marathi which could cater for the vast Marathi-speaking population of the city and the surrounding districts. To meet this need Tilak founded in February the National Publishing Company with a share capital of Rs.100,000, of which fifty per cent was subscribed on the spot. He became one of the directors, selected the editorial staff, organ-

ized the administration, and even helped to erect the printing plant—for he was, among many other things, an expert mechanical engineer. But he was not able to see the first issues of this paper—*Rashtra Mata*—come off the press, for by the time the newspaper appeared Tilak was under arrest. As S. K. Damale, the editor of the new paper once said, "The first big news we published was about Tilak's sentence. Although he was the father of the paper he never saw the birth of the child." This venture, like many other nationalist newspapers, had a short life, as the Government demanded heavy sureties and then proceeded to confiscate them at the first opportunity. No newspaper in the world could survive such a financial drain, if for month after month it was made to pay out thousands of rupees by way of surety, knowing full well that at any moment this money could be—and in the end inevitably would be—confiscated by the authorities.

At this time, with the help of Professor V. G. Vijapurkar, Tilak was also instrumental in setting up a national High School—under the auspices of the Maharashtra University. To collect funds for this project he toured the district of Sholapur and raised a large amount, about Rs.50,000. The High School, which was started under the name of Samartha Vidyalaya, was closed down by Government order in 1910 and Professor Vijapurkar, the principal, and his colleague Mr. Vannanao Joshi were sent to prison for sedition.

Although Tilak was engaged in these various activities, his main objectives, namely, to awaken the people politically and bring about unity in the Congress, were not neglected. Like Mahatma Gandhi, Tilak had the knack of creating gigantic national movements out of the most innocent-looking issues. Such an issue presented itself in the Poona District Conference's resolution on the temperance movement in India. Tilak had always felt strongly about the evil of drink, and when he addressed the conference delegates he threw out a challenge to the youth of the country to devote their lives to the work of saving the people from this evil. Thousands of volunteers, mostly students, came forward, and began to picket drinking booths in Poona. The movement spread rapidly all over Maharashtra and soon became a menace in the eyes of the liquor contractors and the collectors of revenue. Tilak organized village vigilance societies to supervise the volunteers, and laid down special rules for their

guidance, which emphasized that they should carry out their work on an entirely peaceful basis. The volunteers stood in front of the booths and urged intending customers not to buy. Usually this moral approach would prove effective and many people returned home without drinking. In some cases, however, no heed was paid to the volunteers; they would then lie flat on the ground so that a customer determined to go in had to walk over the bodies lying in his way. This often caused a disturbance and frequently led to the ostracizing of the man by his fellow villagers.

In this movement the police detected the growth of a new popular force, while some British officers regarded picketing as an encroachment on the citizens' right and liberty to drink; the police therefore began to attack the volunteers under the pretext of maintaining peace and order. The magistrates' courts were filled with cases brought before them by the police for obstructing the traffic on the highways or similar offences. At first small fines were imposed and offenders discharged with a caution, but the movement quickly gathered momentum when the Government decided to impose heavier fines and send volunteers to prison. A police report of the period records: "The British Raj has ceased to operate in Poona. The man whose authority rules the district is Mr. Tilak." But before long, like all the other movements started by Tilak, the temperance movement was brought to an end by the increasing severity of Government action and Tilak's arrest.

In the midst of these activities Tilak was invited by the Government to give evidence before the Decentralization Commission appointed by Lord Minto to examine the relations between the Government of India and the Provincial Governments on the one hand and the Provincial Governments and the local authorities on the other and also between the different levels of the official hierarchy.

Such an inquiry had become necessary since the efficiency drive of Lord Curzon had over-centralized the British administration and made the Government of India "too wooden, too iron, too inelastic, too antediluvian, to be of any use for the modern purposes" of smooth administration. Lord Morley was no less emphatic in condemning this over-centralization. He expressed his fear that the pure bureaucratic régime was likely to become "rather mechanical,

rather lifeless, rather soulless" and he called it "a great mischief". He went so far as to express the opinion that it was largely responsible for the widening gulf between the officials and the people in India.

Although the Commission did refer to popular discontent in its report it was mainly concerned with matters of administrative detail—of pure administrative devolution of powers in the various Government departments. In his evidence Tilak showed his mastery of the details of administrative work, and his practical suggestions for improvement showed all the skill of a permanent official. In the course of his memorandum Tilak insisted on the need for the transference of authority from a centralized and irresponsible bureaucracy to a body more in touch with public opinion and amenable to popular control. He argued that no amount of decentralization could by itself establish that sense of cordiality between the officials and the people which existed in the earlier days of British rule. Mere decentralization would tend to vest greater powers in the lower officials and make the system unpopular by encouraging local despotism which the people had rightly learnt to look upon with disfavour. The only way to restore good relations between the officials and the people was therefore to create a legal obligation to consult the people and their leaders. In conclusion, he said, "The mere shifting of the centre of power and authority from one official to another is not, in my opinion, calculated to restore the feelings of cordiality between officers and people, prevailing in earlier days. English education has created new aspirations and ideals amongst the people; and so long as these national aspirations remain unsatisfied, it is useless to expect that the hiatus between the officers and the people could be removed by any scheme of official decentralization, whatever its other effects may be. It is no remedy—not even a palliative—for the evil complained of, nor was it ever put forward by the people or their leaders. The fluctuating wave of decentralization may infuse more or less life into the individual members of the bureaucracy, but it cannot remove the growing estrangement between the rulers and the ruled unless and until the people are allowed a more and more effective voice in the management of their own affairs in an ever-expanding spirit of wise liberalism and wide sympathy aimed at raising India to the level of a self-governing country."

Ever since the Surat fiasco Tilak was determined to prevent the Moderates, if he could, from holding a separate congress which, he knew, could never command the nation's confidence or the Government's respect. He therefore took every opportunity to impress upon both his political opponents and his own followers the need to close the ranks and present a united front to the enemy. Week after week through the columns of *Kesari* he hammered home the theme of unity, begging the Gokhales and Mehtas not to weaken the national front by watering down the resolutions of the Calcutta Congress or by imposing on the Congress a creed which would limit the country's political aspirations.

Mr. Khaparde strongly supported Tilak's efforts to bring about unity in the Congress. In a circular letter addressed to all the leaders in the country, he said: "Regret at the occurrences, irrespective of the causes that led to them, appeared to be universal, coupled with a desire that a *modus operandi* should be found to bring together all concerned and arrange for an adjustment, honourable to all alike and calculated to further the cause of the Congress." On the advice of Tilak, the Nationalists appointed a Congress Continuation Committee to revive the suspended session of Surat, and made repeated attempts at *rapprochement* at several provincial conferences. They carried on a vigorous campaign in favour of a united Congress and strove hard to prove that the differences between the two parties were not irreconcilable.

Tilak's articles in *Kesari* on this question were both realistic and statesmanlike. He wrote: "Both the Moderates and the Nationalists must remember that persons belonging to these parties are actuated by a sincere desire to promote the welfare of the country: and that none is deliberately working to bring about its ruin. If both parties start with this assumption, if both are willing to accept the existence of differences of opinion as inevitable, and as constituting a healthy sign in the body politic, there would be less room for misunderstanding. Both the parties should realize that only in unity is there safety and that they have to maintain this unity in spite of acute differences of opinion. Neither should try to stamp out the other or, while trying their utmost to gain the majority in the National Assemblies conducted by the united efforts of the Moderates and the Nationalists, abuse their supremacy by trying to crush or cripple

their opponents in the opposite party. The Moderates should remember that it is because the New Party has come into existence that the bureaucracy condescends to "rally" them. The Nationalists must also understand that though the caution and hesitation of the Moderates is often galling to them, still their influence and prestige are not to be despised. If these are the advantages which one gets from the other, there are some unavoidable disadvantages also. The Nationalists have generally to bear the brunt of the political fight but the rewards of their efforts go invariably to the Moderates. By their association with the Nationalists the Moderates do sometimes receive official frowns and taunts. When taken to task the Moderates must, however, tell the authorities point blank that though they differ in many respects from the Extremists, still, so long as the latter are willing to co-operate with them, they will not part company. True, some of the Nationalists have set up 'Independence' as the ultimate goal of their ambition; but then even Lord Morley does not find anything illegal in such 'faiths and aspirations'. True also that some of the Nationalists preach a boycott which is more than a boycott of British goods; still there is nothing wrong in the Moderates' co-operation within the limits of agreement of the parties. If these points are kept in mind the unity between the two parties will be everlasting."

Unfortunately the Moderates did not look upon the unity question with such objectivity. Dr. Rash Behari Ghose's undelivered address at the Surat Congress, for instance, contained this extraordinary remark: "The Extremist Party is an ominous shadow, which has projected itself over the future fortunes of the country . . . it has no place in the pale of the Congress. Secession, therefore, is the only course open to it."

Tilak's plea for a Congress compromise first bore fruit at the Provincial Conference of United Bengal held at Pabna in February, and presided over by the great Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore whose views, since he had taken no sides in the controversy, were eagerly canvassed. A man of towering personality and penetrating vision, Tagore could easily see the reasonableness of Tilak's contention that the Congress should be united and he therefore gave a valuable lead to the Provincial Conference on this subject. At Pabna both the Extremists and the Moderates were strongly represented, yet they unanimously adopted resolutions on Swadeshi,

Boycott, National Education and Swaraj (which had caused all the bother at the Surat Congress) in the form in which they were originally adopted at Calcutta two years before. This was a sure indication that the political parties in Bengal were in a mood to forget and forgive and ready to work together as a united national force. This was the first victory for Tilak's advocacy of a united Congress, and it was repeated in Provincial Conferences at Dhulia and elsewhere.

Unfortunately Sir Pherozeshah Mehta and his henchmen—Gokhale, Mudholkar, Malaviya and others—had set their faces against any compromise with the Nationalists. Mehta publicly stated in a defence of the new Congress creed the Moderates had adopted at their convention: "The events which took place in Nagpur and Surat and the circumstances under which the Congress broke up in Surat make it now absolutely essential that the unwritten law on which the Congress was based from the beginning, namely, that it was to be a legal and constitutional movement carried on by our organization which loyally accepted British rule, should be now put expressly into words at once clear and unambiguous, unassailable by any such dialectical chicanery as was practised in the last Congress on the boycott resolution, when the words agreed to as meaning one thing were interpreted as meaning another and a very different thing. It is no use shutting one's eyes to the fact—which is within our knowledge (I can speak with authority as regards so-called Extremist leaders in the Bombay Presidency)—that some secretly cherish the idea of using the Congress for aims and methods not altogether constitutional. It is impossible, therefore, to let any doubt exist as to the character of the Congress organization and movement."

On the question of a united Congress Mehta declared: "I cannot help saying that there is a great deal of mawkish sentimentality in the passionate appeals for union at all cost. For my part, I think it is most desirable that each set of distinct convictions should have its separate Congress. To jumble them up in one body confuses the real understanding of the extent to which opinion really tends in one direction or another and it is not possible to make out what are the dimensions of the cleavage and difference of opinion existing on any particular question. . . . It is, therefore, desirable that persons holding nearly the same opinions and principles should organize

themselves into bodies where they can expound them, and lay them before the public in a clear and consistent form. The public can then have the issues clearly before them, and their deliberate judgment can declare itself by the growing favour they would accord to any particular association. For God's sake, let us have done with all inane and whining slobber about unity where there is really none. Let each consistent body of views and principles have its own Congress in an honest and straightforward way, and let God, i.e. truth and wisdom, judge between us all."

Sir Pherozeshah Mehta has been quoted extensively because he was the head and mouthpiece of the Moderate Party and because his statements prove conclusively that he and his party had not the slightest desire to work in co-operation with Tilak and his Nationalist Party. There is ample evidence to suggest that Mehta and his men, in spite of their crocodile tears over the Surat split, were in reality secretly pleased at the prospect of being able to follow their own line without having to fight political battles with their opponents. Perhaps they already had some inkling of the Government's coming decision to proscribe the Nationalist Party; or perhaps they hesitated to voice their real thoughts in public and describe Tilak and his followers as a bunch of "sedition-mongers"—as the Anglo-Indian newspapers and the secret police reports called them.

Not only was Mehta's language strong and far from conciliatory but it breathed an intolerance unworthy of a man of his stature and experience. Tilak's newspapers naturally condemned it roundly; a Calcutta journal described it as "choice epithets of cultured Billingsgate". Even the friendly *Bengalee* edited by Surendranath Bannerjee, a friend and follower of Mehta, was forced to protest against his outburst. Bannerjee wrote, "Sir Pherozeshah Mehta has described the desire for a united Congress as mawkish sentimentality. We regret that he should have used this language in relation to a widespread and deep-seated sentiment which inspires the political world of Bengal. . . . Bengal feels that a sectional Congress is not a National Congress, and that a sectional Congress has no right to speak in the name of the nation. . . . The spirit which we condemn in the Government is not the spirit that we should foster in the bosom of the Congress. Sir Pherozeshah Mehta's language is . . . too masterful to suit the democratic temper of those who have been brought up

amid the traditions of the Congress and the free public life of our province."

A weaker man might have been crushed under Mehta's strong rebuff, but Tilak refused to accept defeat and continued his efforts in search of peace and friendship in the Congress movement. Some of his followers—notably Arabindo Ghose and Dr. Moonje—became restive at his steadfast refusal to give up his ideal of unity. They wanted to accept the division in the country and organize a Nationalist Congress without the Moderates—"We can't go on wooing the reluctant bride," was Dr. Moonje's reaction to Mehta's statement. The young bloods in the New Party evidently wanted to show that their Party's efforts to secure the co-operation of the Moderates stemmed not from weakness but from strength and that they could carry the country with them. However, Tilak would not listen to these separatist counsels, and appointed another committee, which included N. C. Kelkar and Madhavrao Bodas, to explore further, province by province, the prospects of holding a united Congress. He even went so far as to suggest that the members of the New Party should join the Congress by temporarily signing the Congress creed as formulated by the Moderates, and then aim at changing it by democratic processes when they eventually commanded a majority in the organization. He had no doubt in his mind that the vast majority of the Indian people was behind him and his party; he was equally convinced that sooner or later the younger element in the Moderate Party was bound to come round to his point of view, for the people in the country were already accepting it in increasing measure. He was prepared to wait, therefore, and work patiently for his ideal of a united Congress, but unfortunately other forces than those of the Congress were coming into action, which were to change the political pattern of India for many years to come.

The bomb which exploded at Muzafferpore at the end of April not only unnerved the Anglo-Indian community and panicked the government officials; it threw Indian politics into the melting pot. The British editors of the *Pioneer*, the *Asian*, the *Englishman*, the *Statesman*, and many other Anglo-Indian newspapers lost all sense of proportion. They raged against the political leaders—Moderates, Extremists and all—and cried for blood. They conveniently forgot that Mr. Kingsford had ordered the flogging of young students and





Tilak, with Babu Motilal Ghose, founder and editor of *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of Calcutta, 1915

Tilak addressing a meeting soon after the Surat Congress, 1907

insulted trusted Indian leaders like Surendranath Bannerjee; that the thousand public meetings and respectful resolutions praying for a revision of the Bengal partition had been treated with contempt; that they had called the Bengalis a race of cowards; that they invariably condoned the killing of inoffensive and defenceless Indians and assaults on helpless Indian women by Europeans; above all, they forgot that they had themselves written in support of political murders in Russia. The *Pioneer*, which was now preaching the doctrine of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, had in its issue of August 29th, 1906, condoned—if it did not justify—the assassination of M. Stolypin, the Russian Prime Minister, in these words: "The horror of such crimes is too great for words, and yet it has to be acknowledged, almost, that they are the only method of fighting left to a people who are at war with despotic rulers able to command great military forces against which it is impossible for the unarmed populace to make a stand. When the Czar dissolved the Duma, he destroyed all hope of reform being gained without violence. Against bombs his armies are powerless, and for that reason he cannot rule, as his forefathers did, by the sword. It becomes impossible for even the stoutest-hearted men to govern fairly or strongly when every moment of their lives is spent in terror of a revolting death, and they grow into craven shirkers, or sustain themselves by a frenzy of retaliation which increases the conflagration they are striving to check. Such conditions cannot last."

Goaded by the Anglo-Indian Press the Government became panic-stricken and a wave of repression swept over all India. Even before Surat Government repression was in evidence, as in the prosecution of some editors in Calcutta, but after Surat it became a settled policy. Sir Bampfylde Fuller, the Lieutenant-Governor of the newly created Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam, tried to terrorize the people by quartering Gurkha troops in many important places in the Province; even Lord Minto thought this action was "a serious danger". When he ordered that all the students of two schools at Serajgunj should be failed in their examinations for their alleged unruly conduct, it led to a clash with the Viceroy, and Sir Bampfylde threatened to resign if he were not allowed to proceed with the disqualification of the students. To his utter dismay his bluff was called and he had to resign. But the basic attitude of hostility to popular agitation remained unchanged; Fuller merits

notice only because his methods were more drastic than those of others. The policy of favouring the Mohammedans and of crushing all opposition to the partition continued.

The Government of Bengal put on its black list many papers that were carrying on anti-partition agitation, and soon a regular campaign of prosecutions was started against them. The first paper to be prosecuted was the *Vande Mataram*, a nationalist daily printed in English, whose editor, Arabindo Ghose, was charged with seditious libel. About this time the editors of *Sandhya* and *Yugantar* were also prosecuted. Mr. Upadhya, the editor of *Sandhya*, submitted a written statement in which he said: "I do not want to take part in the trial, because I do not believe that, in carrying out my humble share of the God-appointed mission of Swaraj, I am in any way accountable to the alien people who happen to rule over us and whose interest is, and must necessarily be, in the way of our true national development." Four more prosecutions were brought against the *Yugantar* within the next few months and each time the editor and printer were sentenced to imprisonment.

In November 1907 the most ominous repressive measure, the Prevention of Seditious Meetings Act, was passed. As the regulation of Meetings Ordinance promulgated on May 11th was due to expire on November 10th (the life of an Ordinance was limited by law to six months), the Government decided to give it a new lease of life in a more stringent form—the Prevention of Seditious Meetings Act. Even the Government member who introduced it in the Council called it "a repressive measure of considerable potency". The clause defining a public meeting was made so wide that even social meetings held in private houses could be considered public meetings. The Moderate leader, Dr. Sir Rash Behari Ghose, condemned the Act which was intended, he said, "to kill all political life in the country" and was more like "a Russian ukase than any law of a civilized state".

On one single day (June 8th, 1908), when hardly any independent Indian Member was present, the Government of India, by suspending the ordinary rules of procedure, pushed through the Legislative Council two most pernicious and powerful measures of repression—the Explosive Substances Act and the Newspaper (Incitement to Offences) Act.

There was already an Explosives Act, that of 1884, operating in

India, as well as the Indian Arms Act of 1878 and provisions in the Indian Penal Code for punishment up to transportation for life in respect of hurt or mischief caused by explosive substances. But the Government considered the existing law not comprehensive enough to meet the new situation created by the appearance of the bomb. The new Act dealt not only with explosives but also with materials and implements which could be used in their manufacture; anyone found in possession or control of them in suspicious circumstances was liable to transportation for fourteen years or imprisonment for five years. The Act did not deal with explosions which resulted in loss of life (since they were already punishable as murder) but with all other explosions and prescribed heavy penalties for causing them. Even if no explosion actually took place, an intent and an attempt to cause one, if established, were punishable with transportation for twenty years or imprisonment for seven years.

The purpose of the Newspapers Act passed on the same day was explained by the Member in the Council as: "to put an end to their (i.e. of newspapers which contain 'any incitement to murder or any offence under the Explosive Substances Act 1908, or to any act of violence') existence . . . by giving power to confiscate the printing press and to extinguish the newspaper." The Act empowered a District Magistrate to confiscate the printing press of any newspaper which, in his opinion, contained an incitement to acts of violence. The Member coolly declared that he did not regard this measure as in any way repressive!

While these special measures were being rushed through the Council, the Government was launching all over the country a series of prosecutions for sedition under Sections 124A and 153A of the Indian Penal Code, and the Magistrates trying the cases were awarding "thundering" sentences which even Lord Morley could only describe as "outrageous", "monstrous" and "indefensible". Plainly, the terrorist crime had unnerved the Government officials and the Anglo-Indians who were advocating a policy of wholesale revenge and repression.

The year 1908 saw the Government of India following a ruthless policy aimed at suppressing the Nationalists both of the constitutional and of the revolutionary schools. Leaders were deported or detained without trial, student organizations were proscribed; national schools and Swadeshi shops were forcibly closed down;

properties were confiscated and public meetings were dispersed. The Government directed its particular attention towards newspapers and their editors, who were regarded as the real cause of the trouble and the instigators of sedition and discontent.

It is not necessary to describe in detail all the sedition cases that were tried during 1908. For our purpose it will be sufficient to mention only a few. In Madras there were three notable cases: the Tinnevelly case against Messrs. Chidambaram Pillai and Subramania Siva, who were sentenced to six years' transportation; Srinivasa Iyengar of *India* was sentenced to five years' transportation; the editor and proprietor of *Swaraj*, although they submitted an apology for their alleged infringement of the law, were still prosecuted and were sentenced to nine months' imprisonment. The cases of *Vande Mataram* and *Yugantar* in Bengal have already been mentioned. In the Central Provinces the editor of the *Hari Kishore* was sentenced to five years' rigorous imprisonment and the press on which it was printed was confiscated. In the United Provinces the editor of *Urdu-i-Moalla* was sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs.500 for writing an article on the educational policy of the British Government in Egypt; at Aligarh Hoti Lal Varma was sentenced to seven years' transportation for sending a seditious message to the *Vande Mataram*. In Bombay the editors of the *Hind Swaraj*, the *Vihari*, the *Arunodaya* and the *Kal* were sentenced to imprisonment.

This savage repression was disliked even by Lord Morley, the Secretary of State for India, and in a private letter to Lord Minto, the Viceroy, dated July 14th, 1908, he wrote: "I must confess to you that I am watching with the deepest concern and dismay the thundering sentences that are now being passed for sedition, etc. I read today that stone-throwers in Bombay are getting *twelve months*. This is really outrageous. The sentences on the two Tinnevelly-Tuticorin men are wholly indefensible—one gets transportation for life, the other for ten years. . . . They cannot stand. I cannot on any terms whatever consent to defend such monstrous things! I do therefore urgently solicit your attention to these wrongs and follies. We must keep order, but excess of severity is not the path to order. On the contrary, it is the path to the bomb." What an irony of circumstance! Almost at the very hour the Liberal Lord Morley was writing this indignant letter and delivering a homily on the "excess

of severity" Tilak's sedition trial was opening (July 13th, 1908) in the High Court of Bombay.

The seeds of this prosecution can be traced to the abortive session of the Surat Congress which marked the culminating point of the differences between Tilak as leader of the New Party and Mehta and his Moderate school; and in some respects these relations were a reflection of those between Tilak and the Government. The outbreak of violence and political crime in Bengal had both emphasized and accelerated the breakdown of political unity in the country. The news of an attempt on the life of Mr. Allen, the Collector of Dacca, only a couple of days before the Surat Congress, was an ominous incident. It made many delegates feel uncomfortable and anxious, for they knew that the Government was sure to use its extraordinary powers to crush the political movement. When the Surat Congress dispersed and the delegates went home, "carrying with them bitter memories and sullen thoughts", writes N. C. Kelkar, "it looked as if glowing sparks from a fearful furnace had been driven by a malignant wind and spread broadcast among magazines filled to the brim with combustibles". The bomb outrage at Muzafferpore in Bihar towards the end of April offered the Government a golden chance; it was the psychological moment for inaugurating an era of arrests, searches, prosecutions and persecutions.

In these affairs the Bombay Presidency had of course its own share; and the Government hardly concealed its conviction that, whatever might or might not happen in Bengal or elsewhere, Tilak was the source and origin of all political activity in the country and that no campaign of repressive prosecutions could be complete without involving the leader of the New Party. Since his return from Surat, as we have seen already, Tilak had shown unusual activity. The organized picketing at liquor shops was particularly galling to the British officials as they regarded it as the first object-lesson in the training of national volunteers. And as he began to extend his propaganda tours to places even outside the Bombay Presidency, the Government concluded that it was no longer safe to allow Tilak to move freely among the people. In June the Bombay Legislative Council met at Poona and the Governor, Sir George Clarke, made a significant speech in which he remarked that certain persons who possessed influence over the people were in the habit of exciting

feelings of hatred and contempt against the Government and feelings of animosity between classes of His Majesty's subjects; that these persons were only playing with fire and that nothing would deter the Government from putting the law in motion against them.

Everyone knew who was in Sir George's mind when he made these remarks. Before the end of the week Tilak was served with a warrant of arrest in Bombay.

16

THE HISTORIC TRIAL OF 1908

> The despicable sentence passed on the Indian Democrat, Tilak, gave rise to street demonstrations and a strike in Bombay. . . . The class conscious workers in Europe now have Asian comrades and their number will grow by leaps and bounds.
>
> LENIN: *Inflammable Material in World Politics*

Let us take a flight of fancy for a few moments, cast our minds back for 140 years and imagine that the Napoleonic Wars had ended differently. What would the history books now say of events in nineteenth-century England? It might be possible to open a history book and read an account like this:

"In 1815 after Napoleon's defeat of the gallant British general Wellington at the battle of Waterloo and his subsequent successful invasion of England, he organized the country's administration under an efficient system which the English natives spoke of as 'the French bureaucracy'. To remove any political discontent and appease the people an Imperial proclamation was issued in which Napoleon, solemnly calling God to witness, gave a pledge in these words: "We hold ourselves bound to the Natives of our British Territories by the same obligations of duty which bind us to our other subjects, and these obligations by the blessing of Almighty God we shall faithfully and conscientiously fulfil.'

"On the day the proclamation was to be read out in every city, town, village and hamlet in Britain the Emperor sent a special message to his Proconsul in London declaring that 'from the highest to the humblest all may feel that, under our rule, the great principles of liberty, equality and justice are secured to them and that to promote their happiness, to add to their prosperity and advance their welfare are ever-present aims and objects of our Empire'.

"The Natives, in their simple faith, put implicit trust in these sweet promises. The French bureaucracy administered the country as they thought fit and their acts and doings received the more or less unqualified support of their superiors in Paris. The bureaucratic administration soon became the 'Government established by law' in England, and anyone who criticized the French administration in England, or even an act of an individual in the Civil Service, ran the grave risk of being prosecuted for sedition, for such conduct would, in the Government's view, be calculated to bring the French authority into contempt.

"Among the many boons the French conferred on the English was a new legal system for both civil and criminal cases, based upon the French system. This replaced the old English system which gave every man the right to be tried by his fellows, and, even in those cases where a jury was permissible—chiefly political offences—laid down that while a Frenchman could only be tried by a French jury an Englishman could be tried either by a French, or an English, or a mixed jury.

"For long the French rule was unchallenged, but at the end of the century there came into prominence a man named Winston Spencer Churchill. He told the people that the Imperial proclamation of Liberty, Equality and Justice was not an Act of the French Parliament and that therefore the bureaucracy was under no obligation to consider it binding on them (and, indeed, in practice they often did not). It had no legal validity; it was merely the expression of the generous sentiments of the Sovereign towards his English subjects. If the people wanted the principles of the proclamation to be put fully into practice they must organize and agitate against the many evils under which the foreign bureaucracy obliged them to live. Churchill wrote fiery articles and made inspiring speeches which succeeded in awakening the people to the true state of things. Periodical famines and plagues carried off large numbers of the people, but the French bureaucrats declared these were acts of God, and used this convenient pretext to do little or nothing about them. At last the spark of rebellion was set off when, against all the wishes of the people, the bureaucrats split England into two halves, calling them the Northern and Southern Zones, and in reply to all protests blandly declared that the partition could not be annulled since it was now a *fait accompli*, a 'settled fact'. This so enraged a few

hotheads that they conspired together to manufacture small bombs and killed one or two French officials. Churchill deplored the killing but praised the spirit of sacrifice and daring that inspired those young men in protesting against the high-handed policy of the French rulers. In an article in his newspaper he made out a reasonable case to show that this new development of a bomb conspiracy was not the cause but the result of the popular unrest created by the tyrannical methods of the French bureaucrats. 'The people who should be held responsible for the bomb outrages,' he said, 'are the oppressive officials and not the misguided youths.'

"The French bureaucracy took great objection to this and arrested Churchill for writing seditious articles. He was tried by a jury consisting of seven Frenchmen and two Englishmen. Churchill argued that it was unfair to him that in the jury there were seven people whose language was not English, the language in which his articles were written. But the judge ignored this plea and confirmed the composition of the jury 'to ensure impartial justice for the accused'. In cross-examining the translator of the articles, Churchill conclusively proved that the case against him was based on faulty translations and could not stand a moment's scrutiny. Once more the judge ignored his arguments and certified that the translations were accurate. Disregarding all canons of fair play and justice the jury divided seven against two and returned a verdict of guilty, the two dissenting jurymen being English. The judge, accepting the majority opinion, sentenced Churchill to six years' transportation."

"Fantastic!" the reader may say. "It couldn't possibly happen." But is it so fantastic? For the reader will have been quick to see that this imaginary history is in reality a close transposition to an English scene of what actually happened in India. If we read "Tilak" in place of "Churchill" and "the Indians" in place of "the English" we get a perfectly faithful picture of what happened in India, in July 1908.

The agitation caused by the partition of Bengal had reached a culmination in 1908. At Muzzefferpure in Bengal a youth, Khudiram Bose, threw a bomb at a district magistrate, Mr. Kingsford; unfortunately it exploded near two English ladies named Kennedy, and killed them.

This was the signal for the British newspapers to start hounding

the nationalist leaders. Unscrupulously they accused the "agitators" (by which they meant the leaders of the New Party or the Extremists) of preaching the doctrine of violence and hatred against the British Raj. The *Pioneer* of Allahabad wrote on May 7th, "The only force that is apparent behind the present agitation is the sentiment of race-hatred. . . . That indeed had been steadily fanned by the educated community".

The *Statesman of Calcutta* (May 5th, 1908) had no difficulty in stating categorically that the new school not only preached a doctrine of unreasoning hatred of England, but hinted at the necessity of deeds which were only possible if those who did them were willing to die for their country. "These apostles of violence scoffed at the 'mendicant policy' as they called constitutional agitation, and advocated a vague and undefined but obviously mischievous gospel of 'self-help'. . . . There can be little doubt that their teaching has had the effect of turning the heads of a number of enthusiasts."

The Anglo-Indian editors were badly shaken, and some of them lost their nerve. Almost without exception they exaggerated out of all proportion the danger of the solitary bomb exploded at Muzzefferpure. The *Pioneer*, indeed, went so far as to write: "The wholesale arrest of the acknowledged terrorists in a city or district, coupled with an intimation that at any repetition of the offence ten of them would be shot for every life sacrificed, would soon put down the practice, if it should become necessary."

The *Asian* wrote: "Mr. Kingsford has a great opportunity, and we hope he is a fairly decent shot at short range. We recommend to his notice a Mauser pistol with a nick in the filed-off nose of the bullets or a Colt automatic which carries a heavy soft bullet and is a hard-hitting and punishing weapon. We hope Mr. Kingsford will manage to secure a big 'bag' and we envy him his opportunity. He will be more than justified in letting daylight into every strange native approaching his house or his person, and for his own sake we trust he will learn to shoot fairly straight without taking his weapon out of his coat pocket."

An anonymous correspondent of the *Englishman* of Calcutta wrote, "I submit, that powers should be given to the authorities to suppress these agitators by the most ready and simple methods; and were a few of these worthy agitators flogged in public by the town sweepers and their presses confiscated, much of the glamour of the

righteousness of their agitation for the people would be destroyed and their dupes would see them as they are, and not in the kaleidoscopic light which they endeavour to attract to themselves."

The *Times of India*, always ready to attack Tilak's New Party, charged the native Press and well-known speakers with the responsibility for "working ferments in the yeasty brains".

Tilak could not take this lying down. Not only were the wild Anglo-Indian accusations false and wicked as far as the nationalist agitation was concerned, but they were directly incriminating the New Party which owed its rise to him. He wrote spiritedly and countered the Anglo-Indian attack. The fundamental cause of the bomb outrage, he said, was not the political agitation of the Extremist Party but the wholesale repressive policy of the alien bureaucracy which was trying to throttle public opinion by gagging the Indian Press and prohibiting public meetings. His two articles in *Kesari*—"The Country's Misfortune" and "These Remedies are not Lasting"—were typical of Tilak's approach. He attacked the adversary, he appreciated the youthful enthusiasm of the revolutionary party in Bengal without supporting their violence, and he pleaded with the Government to understand the changed psychology of the people. He drew obvious parallels with the situation in Russia where the Czarist tyranny had driven the people to take to the nihilist movement and to the formation of secret societies. The Russian Government had tried all manner of repressive measures—hanging, deportation to Siberia, imprisonment and confiscation of property—but agitation by the people went on. The revolutionaries continued to throw bombs and to commit political murders. Even newspapers like *The Times* of London wrote in all seriousness that when constitutional agitation does not bring the desired results, the people have no option but to resort to bombs and bullets. As Tilak put it, "The most mighty Czar of Russia, too, had perforce to bow down before the bomb, and, after making repeated attempts to break up the Duma, was in the end obliged to establish it as a matter of course. . . . New desires and new ambitions have risen amongst the people and are gathering strength every day," and the Russian authorities interpreted the situation accordingly and changed the character of the administration.

So far as the bombs themselves were concerned, Tilak pointed out the futility of enforcing the Explosives Act, since a bomb could be

manufactured almost anywhere with only a small amount of apparatus. He warned the Government that if it ignored the new ideals and aspirations of the people it would do so at its peril. "The Government has passed the Newspapers Act in order to stop the process of awakening; therefore, it is possible the disappointment may take on a more terrible form and turn the heads of even the most thoughtful and intelligent people. The real and lasting method of stopping bombs is to make a start with the granting of important rights of self-rule to the people. It is impossible for measures of repression to have a lasting effect on the people of India."

The Governor of Bombay, Sir George Clarke (later Lord Sydenham), had these articles translated into English and it was not long before he decided to prosecute Tilak "under Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code and any other Section of the said Code (including Section 153A) which may be found to be applicable to the case". The warrant of arrest was issued on June 24th, 1908, and charged Tilak with "bringing or attempting to bring into hatred and contempt and exciting or attempting to excite disloyalty and feelings of enmity towards His Majesty and the Government established by law in British India".

This charge was based on the first article—"The Country's Misfortune"—but the prosecution was not satisfied with one article and wanted to make doubly sure. They accordingly issued another warrant for arrest on charges arising from the other article—"These Remedies are not Lasting"—and served it on Tilak when he was already in police custody.

The decision to prosecute Tilak had been taken at the highest level, and had been agreed upon after consultation between the Governor of Bombay, Sir George Clarke, the Viceroy, Lord Minto, and the Secretary of State, Viscount Morley, in London. No Indian had been taken into the official confidence and consulted at any stage, for there did not exist any real confidence between the English and the Indian officials. Some of the instructions and advices about Tilak's trial which passed between the Viceroy in Calcutta and the Governor in Bombay were exchanged through special couriers. It seemed, indeed, as if the Government could not trust its own postal and telegraph departments.

An Indian police officer who was serving in Bombay in 1908 has described the behaviour of his superior British officers as most

mysterious and suspicious. "I used to feel extremely uncomfortable—the whole English population in Bombay seemed to be engaged in some cloak-and-dagger plot in an Edgar Wallace crime story," he later declared.

In spite of all the confidential arrangements news of what had been decided on leaked out, and Tilak was warned of the impending danger. He had arranged to go to Bombay to help prepare the defence of his friend Professor S. N. Paranjape, the editor of a Marathi weekly *The Kal*, who was being tried for sedition in one of his articles. As he was boarding the train for Bombay, his friend Mr. Bapusaheb Gandhi (no relation to Mahatma Gandhi) whispered to Tilak that he should postpone his journey as he had come to know of the Government's decision to arrest him on his arrival in Bombay. Mr. Gandhi, who was a well-known lawyer, advised Tilak to return home and make the necessary arrangements about his family and the newspapers he edited in case he could not return to Poona.

Tilak replied, "What's the use of going back? Have I to raise an army or dig a ditch round my castle to stop the enemy's attack? The Government have turned the whole country into a vast prison. What they will do is nothing more than remove me from a large hall and thrust me into a small room. What is there to prepare for this short journey?" Tilak travelled as he had planned, and on arrival at Bombay went to stay in his usual hotel, the Sardar Griha.

A similar incident happened in Bombay on June 24th, the day he was actually arrested. A few hours before the Police Superintendent arrived with the warrant for Tilak's arrest, Mr. Yashawant Rao Kulkarni, a personal helper of Tilak, received a message to say that the Presidency magistrate had just signed the warrant and the arrest could be expected at any moment. On his return to the hotel Tilak was told. Sorrowfully he muttered to himself, "What is the use of knowing this news beforehand, to a leader of a nation which has no guts to fight back?" and he retired for a short rest. He was too tired to give much thought to the bad news he had received. He slept on it!

After nearly three hours police officers arrived. Tilak received them in all friendliness and jokingly said, "I know the Presidency magistrate signed the warrant for my arrest four hours ago and it's

hardly a quarter of an hour's journey to Sardar Griha from your office. Why did you take so long? If you had come earlier I would have had time to apply for release on bail. Anyway, let us not waste any more time." He put on his *pugri* (Mahratta head-dress), thrust his supari silver case in his pocket, picked up his walking-stick and walked out of the room with the officers as if he were going to attend a marriage reception, so carefree and indifferent to the future did he seem.

He was straight away taken to the police cell for those awaiting trial and lodged there for the night along with a number of common prisoners—petty thieves, dacoits and murderers.

The delay in serving the warrant was not accidental. The Government had no intention of freeing Tilak on bail. The next day when Tilak's attorney applied for bail, the application was refused by the Presidency Magistrate, Mr. Aston, the same man who had set in motion the harassing prosecution against Tilak in the Tai Maharaj case six years before.

On July 2nd Tilak renewed his application for bail, this time before Mr. Justice Davar in the High Court of Bombay. But this application also was refused.

This refusal on the part of Mr. Justice Davar had a special significance of its own. Tilak's counsel, Mr. Mohammed Ali Jinnah, referred to Tilak's earlier trial in 1897—when he was charged with the same offence of sedition under the same Sections 124A and 153A of the Indian Penal Code—and to the ruling of Mr. Justice Tyabji, under which the accused was released on bail. After all, Mr. Jinnah argued, the leading principle of jurisprudence was that a man was to be presumed innocent until he had had a fair trial and was found to be guilty. Furthermore, he pointed out, there had been no suggestion by the prosecution that Tilak would not come forward to stand his trial.

These arguments fell on deaf ears. Mr. Justice Davar, who was Tilak's counsel in 1897 and had secured his client's temporary release, had then put forward precisely the same argument which was now advanced by Mr. Jinnah. But in the intervening eleven years much had happened. Mr. Davar, a young barrister in 1897, was no longer a free agent in 1908. He had become a member of the official class, a cog in the machinery of the imperial administration. Although he put on a brave face, it was not difficult to read between

the lines of his refusal. He was acting on instructions. Of course, he said, he was "very familiar with the judgment of Mr. Tyabji and with all that had preceded it and the arguments made use of by both sides". He had given the matter his most anxious consideration. "If it was only a question of personal feeling I would be most unwilling to keep the prisoner in custody before his trial, but . . ." And he concluded, "I think it would be wise, under the present circumstances, not to give any reason, or enter into a discussion of the considerations weighing with me in refusing the application. I came to this decision with much regret, but I am constrained to refuse bail, pending the trial."

Mr. Davar in his private life was a likeable, honest and straightforward man. If it had been left to him, there was no doubt he would have granted Tilak's application. But the Governor of Bombay, Sir George Clarke, and the entire machinery of British Imperialism were working behind the scenes to make sure the case went the way they wished.

What was true of this application for bail was true also of the whole conduct of the trial. The prosecution was instituted by the Government for a political offence under the special sanction of His Excellency the Governor in Council, Bombay, and therefore a special jury was asked for by the prosecution. Mr. Joseph Baptista, for Tilak, opposing the special jury said: "A special jury would be most detrimental to the defence. In the benevolent theory of the law a jury is designed chiefly, if not exclusively, for the benefit and protection of the accused. If therefore we had made the application Your Lordship would have good reason to entertain it favourably. But we do not want it. In fact we are afraid of the proferred gift. *Timeo Danaos dona ferentes.* Why then should it be forced on us against our will?" However, to be helpful, Mr. Baptista even agreed to a special jury "provided the prosecution agrees that the majority on the special jury should consist of Indians conversant with the language in which the indicated articles are written, viz. Marathi".

This would have given the prosecution the special jury they were seeking and the defendant a jury of fit judges composed of his countrymen, which is, after all, one of the fundamental essentials in a trial by jury.

On the question of a special jury, Mr. Justice Davar ruled that the cases against Tilak were important ones and therefore "in his

own interests he should have the benefit of being tried by a jury selected from the citizens of Bombay, but from the higher class of citizens".

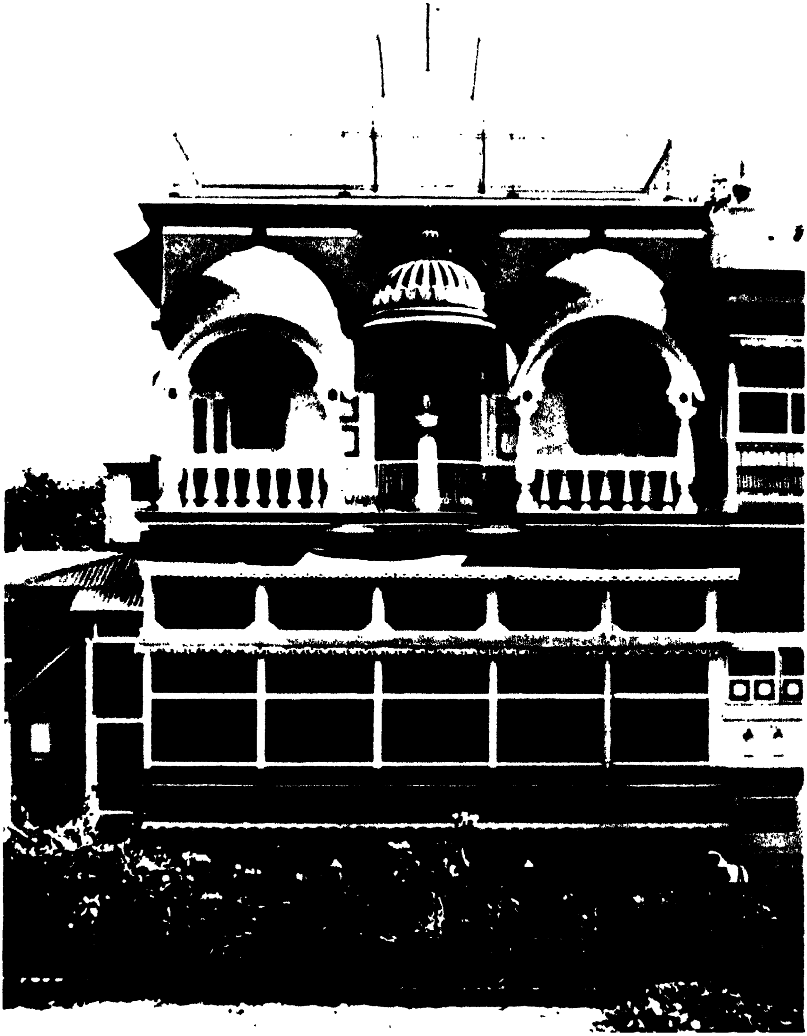
Accordingly, a special jury was empanelled—of seven Englishmen and two Indians.

The hearing began on July 13th.

Tilak pleaded his own case in the hope that he would be able to explain better to the jury the real meaning of his articles and his main purpose in writing them. In the first instance he cross-examined the Government translator on the correctness of the translations and extracted numerous admissions from him that the terms and words used to translate the original Marathi into English were either incorrect, misleading or, at the very least, did not convey the spirit of the original Marathi idiom. Then again, Tilak emphasized that these articles were written to put forward the Indian point of view and to reply to the many mischievous suggestions and inferences made by British-owned newspapers such as the *Times of India*, the *Pioneer*, the *Englishman*, and the *Statesman*, which were taking advantage of the bomb-explosion at Muzzafferpure to urge the Government to suppress all forms of political agitation—constitutional or criminal, moderate or murderous.

Under Tilak's searching cross-examination the Government witness almost broke down. He confessed that, although he had certified their accuracy, he was not the actual translator of the articles for which Tilak was being tried. Comparison of the texts showed that certain important words had been omitted from the Government translation. When, in answer to his Lordship, the witness agreed that some words had been omitted, Tilak seized on this admission and quickly asked, "Mr. Joshi has vouched for the High Court translation but now he says he is not responsible for it. Is the High Court translator coming to depose?" The Advocate-General for the Government replied, "No, My Lord, we do not intend to call him". Thereupon the Judge coolly ruled, "It is not usual to call him; the High Court translation is generally accepted as a correct translation".

Could this have passed without challenge in any other country? A man is accused of a serious crime on the basis of a translated version of his writings, which an expert deposing on oath admits to be incorrect—yet the judge rules that it was a correct translation!



Tilak's residence in Poona, known as the Gaikwar Wada

But this is only one more instance of the way in which justice was dispensed in India, particularly where Tilak was concerned.

A short digression is not out of place here, as throwing some light on the working of the official mind. A warrant was issued for searching Tilak's house in Poona, but it did not mention his bungalow at Sinhgarh, some twelve miles away from Poona. That made no difference to the police, who, without informing Tilak's manager or his family, went to Sinhgarh, broke open the house, and searched it. Search as they might, they did not find anything incriminating. The police must also have been very disappointed at the results of their search of Tilak's house in Poona, for they could find nothing really damning. But they did come across a postcard on which Tilak had written the names of two books on explosives and their publishers: *Handbook on Modern Explosives* by Eissler, and *Nitro-Explosives* by P. Gerard Sanford.

This postcard was used against Tilak to suggest that he was manufacturing bombs. The true explanation was a simple one. The Government had just passed the Explosives Act and *Kesari* had severely criticized its provisions in its issue of June 11th, 1908, and Tilak had noted the names of these two books for reference. The Advocate General, however, was not prepared to accept this explanation. In his address he pointedly suggested that, as Tilak was being prosecuted for articles on the Muzzafferpore bomb outrage in which he had praised the arrival of the bomb in Indian politics as a welcome development, it was impossible to accept his explanation of the postcard, namely, that the books were necessary in considering the definition of explosives in the Explosives Act. He argued, "If the general contents of the articles are sufficient to prove that there was an attempt to terrorize the Government by threats, open or concealed, that bombs will be thrown, I put it to you whether the existence of this card is not a fact to be taken into consideration in considering the action of the accused. If this is not a threat, what is it? You find this man repudiating the bomb by his words and articles; but while repudiating the bomb and its use he tells the Government that unless they guarantee reforms, bombs will continue. He says the Government has had a salutary warning and when you find a card about explosives in that man's own handwriting I must leave you to come to your own conclusion."

It is unnecessary to go into the details of this trial, except to say

that Tilak addressed the jury for twenty-one hours and ten minutes, more than three days of the Court. He cited innumerable instances from the English law reports and quoted weighty authorities bearing on the question of sedition as it is understood in England. But it was all to no purpose. The Government had made up its mind, the Judge knew what verdict the Government wanted, and the jury was packed with Anglo-Indians; the verdict could scarcely be in doubt.

Mr. Justice Davar's summing-up was no more impartial and objective than the Attorney-General's prosecuting speech. In his direction to the jury the Judge only underlined in judicial language the points of law made more emphatically by the prosecution. Where the Advocate-General had been emphatic and dogmatic, the Judge conceded there might possibly be some doubt of Tilak's guilt, and added as a sop, "It is for you to judge." Yet he immediately went on, "Do you talk of patriotism in the case of bombs—bombs that effect murders? You are the judges of whether such a discussion does or does not tend to bring the Government as established by law in India into hatred and contempt. . . . He (the accused) says that when the Bengalis were resorting to perfectly proper and legitimate means for their national regeneration the Government became irritated by this patriotism of the Bengalis and, letting loose some Mussulman budmashes, caused damage to their property and the honour of their women. Is it fair? Is it or is it not a charge against the Government of inciting Mohammedans for the most improper purposes to attack the Bengalis, loot their property and violate their women? It is for you to say. Would anybody, after reading that, have any respect for the Government or would their feelings be those of hatred and contempt and disloyalty? . . . I repeat again, judge of these articles for yourselves, do not allow what I have said to influence you beyond drawing your attention to the articles."

The jury took only an hour and a quarter to return a verdict of guilty—seven against two—the majority being Anglo-Indians and the two dissenting jurymen Indians. Mr. Justice Davar, accepting the majority verdict, sentenced Tilak to six years' transportation and remarked: "It seems to me that it must be a diseased mind, a most perverted mind, that could say that the articles which you have written are legitimate weapons in political agitation. They are seething with sedition; they preach violence; they speak of murders with approval and the cowardly and atrocious act of committing

murders with bombs not only seems to meet with your approval but you hail the advent of the bomb in India as if something has come to India for its good. . . . Your hatred of the ruling class has not disappeared during these ten years, and these articles were deliberately and defiantly written week after week, not, as you say, on the spur of the moment, but a fortnight after that cruel and cowardly outrage had been committed upon two innocent English women. You wrote about bombs as if they were legitimate instruments in political agitations. Such journalism is a curse to the country."

The atmosphere in the Court became electric as the last words of Tilak reverberated through the dimly-lit hall: "All I wish to say is that in spite of the verdict of the jury I maintain that I am innocent. There are higher powers that rule the destiny of things and it may be the will of Providence that the cause which I represent is to prosper more by my suffering than by my remaining free."

17

PUBLIC OPINION AND THE SENTENCE

> Put justice away, and what are your empires but brigandage and rapine?
>
> St. Augustine

It was ten o'clock at night when his historic trial came to an end. Tilak was hustled out through the back door of the High Court into a waiting car and was taken to a special train which steamed off to Ahmedabad. Next day, July 23rd—Tilak's fifty-third birthday—he arrived at the Sabarmati Jail and began his six years' imprisonment.

Outside the High Court thousands of people had gathered to honour him and catch a last glimpse. They waited in the pouring rain, but no one told them of Tilak's departure until the train had left Bombay. When the people came to know how their leader had been whisked away their disappointment turned to anger. Stones were thrown at the police and one European sergeant was so badly hurt that he had to be taken to hospital. The workers in the cotton mills, perhaps anticipating the result of the trial, had started sporadic and irregular strikes in various parts of the city soon after the trial began. Now they decided to stop work for six days in protest—one day for each year of Tilak's sentence. The people were enraged beyond measure and the disturbances which followed the trial continued sporadically for nearly a week—an indication of Tilak's vast influence and popularity. Even the Government acknowledged this, though in a back-handed manner, in its report on the trial. Sir George Clarke, the Governor of Bombay, in a confidential communication dated September 18th, 1908, wrote: "The dangerous extent which his influence has attained was seen in the disturbances which occurred in Bombay after his conviction, the strike of the millhands and the closing of the cloth, freight and share markets. If he

had been allowed more time to mature his plans it is quite possible that he might have succeeded in promoting a 'general strike', which is one of the Russian methods advocated by the violent party."

In a semi-official letter to the Viceroy, Lord Minto, Sir George Clarke wrote on July 27th, 1908: "It is not generally understood that Tilak's conviction has created widespread sympathy on the part of people. . . . This is notably the case in Bombay. I came here yesterday to look into the situation, and I convened a private meeting of the most representative commercial and industrial people this afternoon. I addressed them and admonished them plainly as to their duty in the present trouble. Afterwards I saw some of them privately, and I think they all sympathize with Tilak in his fall." Apparently Sir George expected a servile condemnation of Tilak from his hand-picked wealthy businessmen, but he did not get it. The words "I think they all sympathize with Tilak in his fall" witness to the success of Tilak's political mission for they unconsciously express the measure of sympathy felt for Tilak by the most representative commercial and industrial people, who had much to gain by the continuance of British rule. What greater triumph could a leader expect or hope for? The wealthy layer of any society is the hardest to penetrate with a new idea, particularly an idea which is born of sacrifice. Tilak's six-year sentence for his uncompromising stand in the struggle for the country's cause was not only his but the country's baptism of fire, and even the merchant princes of Bombay were not proof against the flame he had lit.

Such was the commotion on the night of Tilak's conviction that even the Government machinery was thrown out of gear. The first telegram which was sent from the Government of Bombay to the Viceroy at Simla read: "Tilak sentenced to six years' imprisonment and rupees one thousand fine," but a few moments later it was corrected to: "Read Tilak sentenced to transportation not imprisonment." Another typical telegram was sent from Simla by the Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department, to the Secretary to the Government of Bombay, Judicial Department: "Clear the line. Newspapers state that Tilak was placed on board Indian marine steamer *Mayo* which then sailed for Andamans. Government of India desires to know whether this is true, and if so, to be furnished with full statement of reasons for such action without previous reference to them." Immediately the Government of

Bombay replied: "Clear the line. Your number 220 (political). The statement you refer to is entirely without foundation."

The Government of India was seized by another attack of nerves over the whereabouts of Tilak. On the following day they again telegraphed to Bombay: "Your telegram of yesterday. Please wire immediately where Tilak is now and what steps are contemplated to carry out sentence of transportation. The Government of India desires to be kept fully informed from time to time of all action taken in a matter which attracts so much attention both here and in England."

The Governor, Sir George Clarke, wrote a long letter to the Viceroy to explain the situation, in which he said: "I am very sorry that anyone at Simla should think me capable of transporting Tilak direct from the High Court to the Andamans. The story was the most obvious bazaar rumour of the kind which has been disseminated wholesale just now and which has caused our disturbances here."

All these inquiries, telegrams and explanations clearly show how touchy the Government were at any reference to Tilak and his imprisonment. In point of fact the diaries and documents of that period suggest that Lord Morley, the Secretary of State for India, and the Governor of Bombay, Sir George Clarke, differed sharply in opinion over the advisability and wisdom of launching a prosecution against Tilak.

Extracts from the correspondence between them are worth quoting. Writing on May 8th, Lord Morley said: "The bombs are a disgusting feature—and one of which we shall have plenty more both now and in days to come. They make new difficulties in the way both of political reform and military reductions: to say nothing of provoking loud cries for repression. I suppose that Poona is more likely than Bengal for these diabolic operations."

On July 3rd, he wrote: "By the way, I do not count among welcome things the proceedings against Tilak. I dare say the course you have taken was inevitable . . . still, when all this is said, it may well be that you had no choice. Gokhale, however, told Courteney that it would prove an ugly discouragement to the Moderates. This may indeed be true, but then . . . we cannot allow Tilak and his men to set the law at defiance. This must be made plain both in our interests and theirs, for if we get a character for timidity there's an end of 'reforms'." Then came a postcript: "Since writing to you an hour

ago I have come across the article in the *Kesari* for which I understand Tilak is being prosecuted. I confess that at the first glance I felt as if it might have been passed over. But you have means of knowing the actual effect produced or likely to be produced. That is the real test of the quality of sedition."

On July 31st, after Tilak was found guilty and sentenced to transportation, Lord Morley wrote again: "I won't go over the Tilak ground again beyond saying that, if you had done me the honour to seek my advice as well as that of your lawyers I am clear that I should have been for leaving him alone. And I find no reason to believe that any mischief that Tilak could have done would have been so dangerous as the mischief that will be done by his sentence. Of course, the milk is now spilled and there's an end on it."

The philosopher-statesman was still agitated over Tilak's case. He again reverted to it and wrote on August 7th: "Your vindication of the proceedings against Tilak does not shake me. That they were morally and legally justifiable is true enough and that the result may bring certain advantages at the moment is also true. But the balance of gain and loss, when the whole ultimate consequences are counted up, that is the only political fact. Time must show." Lord Sydenham sums up his correspondence with the Secretary of State for India in these words: "It was most natural that Lord Morley's pride of intellect should induce him to believe that he must know better than the man on the spot, who was quite unable to present on paper the intricacies of the situation, and whose mind had been made up only after months of deliberation."

Representatives of nearly every shade of public opinion in India challenged the savage sentence passed on Tilak by Justice Davar, both on the question of legality and on grounds of equity. Whatever the technicalities of law, popular opinion was unanimous in assuming that Tilak was removed from the scene not so much for his "seditious writings" as for his courageous advocacy of the people's rights. They had already noted that the composition of the jury was a guarantee against Tilak's acquittal. They were enraged, however, at the audacity of Mr. Justice Davar (who did not understand the high-flown Marathi in which Tilak had written his articles) in convicting him and passing on him what was considered virtually a death sentence. Neither in India nor in England did anyone think that he would return home alive. The *Manchester Guardian* said,

"Mr. Tilak is fifty-two. He will never return from the penal settlement to which he has been consigned." The *Bengalee* of Calcutta, edited by Tilak's opponent, Surendranath Bannerjee, said, "The public will not enter into legal or complicated technicalities, but there is the broad fact that the verdict was not a unanimous one and that two of the jurors who sat to try him brought in a verdict of not guilty. . . . The presiding Judge ought to have realized the fact that, strong as might have been his own view of the matter, there were honest and capable men who had formed a different opinion which he was bound to respect, if not by accepting it, at any rate, by recognizing it as a factor in the determination of the punishment to be inflicted. With all respect for the Judge, we regard the sentence as monstrous—as utterly out of proportion to the offence alleged to have been committed, and as one which will be universally condemned by our countrymen and all right-thinking men."

The Mussalman, the mouthpiece of the Mohammedan community of India wrote: "If it was the intention of the Government to give the accused a fair trial we think the jury should not have been constituted in the manner in which it was. . . . We think his Lordship has gone too far in inflicting such a heavy punishment. It is unfortunate that courts in the land, both high and low, are becoming more or less devoid of sense of proportion in inflicting punishments in cases of a political nature."

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of Calcutta said: "If Mr. Tilak were tried in England, and two jurors were in his favour the presiding Judge would not have accepted the verdict of the majority but would have ordered a re-trial; and the accused would not have been convicted till the jury were unanimous. What then could have led Mr. Justice Davar to follow a procedure which no Judge in England would venture following?"

Newspapers and public men in Great Britain were not less enraged at the manner in which the sedition case was conducted and at the heavy sentence inflicted on Tilak. Sir Henry Cotton, a retired member of the Indian Civil Service, feelingly wrote in the *New Age* that "one despairs of making an Englishman grasp the true inwardness of the events which are taking place in India; as Emerson discovered—there is in the Englishman's brain a valve that can be closed at pleasure as an engineer shuts off steam". Sir Henry is particularly revealing on the composition of the special jury: "The

articles which have brought about the conviction of Mr. Tilak were written neither in English nor in the mother tongue of the Parsees but in the Marathi language. There are dozens of Marathi-speaking Hindus on the special jury-list of the High Court. Why were all such so rigidly excluded from the jury, which was made up of seven Englishmen and two Parsees, and which went against the accused, as has been said, in exactly that proportion of seven to two? In the course of his six days' address, Mr. Tilak strongly denounced the inaccuracy of the official translations of the offending articles. They would, he said, make anything seditious and could only be compared to distorting mirrors. He demanded either new translations or a complete acquittal. He obtained neither, but a verdict of guilty from a jury of whom it is safe to say that seven of the nine were not able to read a single word of the articles in their original Marathi."

Mr. H. M. Hyndman, the well-known socialist thinker and writer, contributed a letter to *The Times* in which he said: "I defy anyone to point to a sentence in Mr. Tilak's articles which incites to bomb-throwing or violence; and I cannot understand how Englishmen, who have always supported peoples struggling for freedom in other countries, and are doing so today in regard to Russians or Turks, can resort to such measures of repression as those which Lord Morley and Lord Minto, both nominally Liberals, are applying in India."

Mr. Keir Hardie, the Father of the Labour Party in Parliament, wrote in the *Labour Leader*: "There is no man in India who has such a hold upon the working class as Mr. Tilak and the result of his conviction will be more far-reaching than that of any single individual which has yet taken place. . . . His standing in literature is on a par with that of Tchaikovsky, the Russian who is in prison without trial in Russia, or with our own Alfred Russell Wallace, in science. I mention these things that it may be understood who and what Mr. B. G. Tilak is."

The Scotsman of Edinburgh wrote: "The closing of the markets is perhaps of graver import than the riots, as it serves to show that the feeling of the largest and wealthiest, if not also the most intelligent and enterprising community of Indian merchants and financiers, is on the side of Mr. Tilak. . . . He is a man of scholarship and great intellectual ability, an eminent leader standing by reputation high above the coarser and more violent type of demagogue. The serious aspect of the situation is that all Native Bombay, from mill worker to

merchant, seems to sympathize with the convict. The feeling is certainly proof of the supreme popularity of the man."

India of London said, "We do not know if the trial and sentence will be described in any quarter as a triumphant illustration of the impartiality of British Justice. It certainly does not strike us in that light and those who have set the engine of the law in motion after this fashion may rest assured that they have dealt a staggering blow to the cause of constitutional reform in the Western Presidency."

The Star said: "It appears that Mr. Tilak's articles were not direct incitements to the use of bombs. His language was vague and veiled. He indulged in subtle hints and delicate insinuations. Now, we all know that nothing is easier than to fasten upon the rhetoric of a politician in critical times a darker meaning than it would sustain in times of peace. The leading case of Parnell and the Invincibles must always be remembered. There was a period during which few Englishmen believed in Parnell's innocence, and his speeches were ransacked for phrases which could be interpreted in a sinister way."

The Times of London, of course, justified the Government's action, but had the grace to say that it was not suggesting that Tilak had guilty knowledge of the "darker developments" of the Extremist movement. "The real importance of Mr. Tilak's conviction," it said, "lies in the fact that he is the acknowledged and undisputed leader of the Extremist movement in India. . . . Mr. Tilak remained at the moment of his conviction the most conspicuous politician in India and among large sections of the people he has enjoyed a popularity and wielded an influence that no other public man in the Dependency could claim to equal. The Extremists' movement in its open manifestations, both within and outside the Congress, was almost entirely his conception."

The *Manchester Guardian* commented: "The nature of the sentence passed upon Mr. Tilak will be interpreted throughout India as a proof that the Government had resolved by hook or by crook to remove him from their path. He has been condemned on his 'general record'—which being interpreted means that he has been punished because he can and does stir up to higher things the emotion of a multitude that understands him. . . . The memory of his trial and his conviction will serve for many a long day to prevent that amelioration of race bitterness and that restoration of confidence and mutual understanding without which the good government of

India by Englishmen is entirely impossible, and without which all 'reforms' will be completely futile."

Read again after the passage of the years, the words of the Liberal *Manchester Guardian* sound prophetic. The racial bitterness between the Indian people and the White bureaucracy which was caused by Tilak's imprisonment made understanding more and more difficult as time went on—and ended in the loss of India. It also shattered India's confidence in the impartiality of courts of law, which had been for so long the corner-stone of British rule. The man in the street openly accused the Government of putting pressure on the judge to ensure that Tilak was sentenced, so smoothing the path for the constitutional reforms which were soon to be introduced—the Morley-Minto scheme.

Tilak had no illusions about the reforms when, in September 1907, the Government of India published its tentative proposals and "inspired" discussion about them was first started. The reforms were to begin with the setting-up of a Council of Notables—mainly Princes and landlords with a sprinkling of wealthy businessmen and members of the professional classes. This Council was to come into being not by an Act of Parliament but by a decree of the Viceroy who would hand-pick its members. Tilak's article in *Kesari* ("The He-Buffalo's Udder") described it as a Council of "Not-ables". The article is a fine specimen of Tilak's powers as a journalist; his withering sarcasm and devastating argument effectively killed this preposterous proposal but its author was marked down by the authorities as a "dangerous man", and the C.I.D. file on Tilak steadily grew.

Tilak's stand on the Morley-Minto reforms was fully vindicated when they finally came into force. Less than two years after the introduction of the reforms, the Moderates (who, while they had no direct hand in the Government's prosecution of Tilak, had shown their acquiescence by their eloquent silence) began to express their disillusionment and disappointment. It soon became apparent that the Morley-Minto Reforms did not satisfy India's political hunger for responsible government. These reforms gave the people's representatives the power to speak and debate endlessly, and nothing else. Responsibility stayed firmly in the hands of the Government officials.

Such was the political atmosphere in India when Tilak began his prison sentence at Mandalay.

18

IN MANDALAY JAIL

Virtue may be assailed, but never hurt,
Surprised by unjust force, but not enthralled.

JOHN MILTON

The six years of Tilak's prison life in the Central Jail of Mandalay were a period of almost unbroken solitary confinement. His only companions were the convict cooks sent out from India, the jailer, the doctor, the Superintendent, and occasionally a welfare visitor who went to inspect the prison. He was not allowed any newspapers or magazines, not even a book on current politics. He could write and receive one letter a month and was allowed one visitor every three months. This gives some idea of the complete isolation and solitude in which Tilak had to pass these long years.

Subhas Chandra Bose, the Indian patriot and leader of the rebel forces, who fought against the British in the last war, was also interned in Mandalay Jail, and his impressions of the place give some idea of the conditions under which prisoners lived. Bose writes: "The climate of Mandalay, according to our experience, was unhealthy and unfavourable to a degree and the more so as we ourselves were the inmates of a wooden cage in Mandalay Jail, as was Lokamanya Tilak. We could therefore visualize the conditions under which Lokamanya had to live there several years before. In summer the place was a veritable furnace. The wooden palisading afforded no protection either from the heat or the glare, and the tiles overhead only aggravated the discomfort. Dust storms were frequent during that season; the heat and the dust made a good combination to heighten our physical suffering. In winter the cold was bitter, and the wooden bars equally failed to shut out the cold and the biting blast. In a word, the inmates of the building were

entirely at the mercy of the elements. Summer was the longer season. The heat was simply scorching—I have hardly ever experienced such heat in my life. Wet towels wrapped round one's person would dry in no time. Until midnight the air was hot and the place was so close and stuffy that sleep was impossible. Hardly any one of us escaped repeated attacks of sore throat, colds and influenza. The atmosphere was so depressing that one would feel overcome with lassitude and sustained intellectual work in that atmosphere was wellnigh impossible."

Yet in these climatic conditions Tilak not only went through his long prison sentence without any complaint, but did the most strenuous intellectual work and produced his magnum opus, the *Gita Rahasya*. Moreover, he was not in the best of health when he was confined there—he was suffering from diabetes and had to adhere to a very rigid diet.

The account of the Press interview which Tilak gave on his return to Poona on June 23rd, 1914 is a revealing document. He speaks little of his hardships and confines himself to telling the facts from the moment he was removed from the High Court to the day he was brought back home. He says: "As soon as the Judge pronounced the sentence, I was not allowed to see anybody and was immediately taken to the railway station in a motor-car and put in a special train, evidently kept ready there for some time beforehand in anticipation of the verdict of the Court. No one told me where I was being taken nor did I care to inquire. Next morning at seven o'clock our train stopped outside the Sabarmati Jail. The Collector of Ahmedabad was there to receive me. He and the police helped me to get down and took me inside the Jail.

"There I changed into prison garb. As I had been sentenced to hard labour, my food and accommodation were those of an ordinary prisoner. The food did not agree with me, and in ten days I lost ten pounds in weight. The Jail authorities suspected that I was on a sort of hunger strike so they put a watch on me for two or three days. They soon found that their suspicion was without foundation, and thereafter, on the advice of the doctor, I was given two pounds of milk and two ounces of ghee per day; I was also given wheat bread in the morning and rice in the evening. After a month there was some improvement in my weight and the authorities therefore continued to give me this diet. I was

not given any work, however, as my weight was still below average.

"I had an idea that they would not keep me at Ahmedabad very long as my sentence was one of transportation. My hunch proved correct, as on September 13th, 1908 at eight o'clock in the morning the door of the cell in which I was sleeping was unlocked and the jailer came in to take me to the prison office. There I found that they had made all preparations for my removal. A train was waiting for us just outside the jail walls, but no one told me where I was going. A Gujarathi Brahmin prisoner had been detailed to cook for me but he also did not know where we were being taken. We were accompanied by a police party composed of one European officer and eight Mohammedan constables who were also in the dark as to our destination. When they took me out of the jail they gave me my usual dress, namely, dhoti, shirt and pugri (Poona turban). It seems that the Jail Superintendent had been informed, two or three days before, of the Government's decision to change my sentence from hard labour to simple imprisonment, but he did not tell me this and I came to know about it only when I reached Mandalay.

"Although I was taken out of the Sabarmati Jail with all possible secrecy I heard people shouting, 'Tilak-Maharaj-ki-jai', when our train halted at Miyagaon, near Baroda. Of course I could not see the people, as the windows were shuttered and barred and the doors closed. We arrived at Bombay Harbour early in the morning at about six-thirty. The police officers were present to receive us, and took us in a steam launch straight to the *Harding*, a military transport vessel. Here, again, no one knew the destination of the boat except the captain. It was a big ship but my cook and myself were confined to the small, stifling cabins in the hold where sailors undergoing punishment were kept. In the hold it was unbearably hot and stuffy; only in the morning and evening was I allowed to have a walk for one hour on deck under the watchful eye of a European inspector.

"The *Harding* did not stop anywhere on its journey and we reached Rangoon Harbour on the ninth day. The news of my arrival there was apparently known, for there were about two thousand people on the quay as I disembarked. A train was waiting and I was soon on board with the police escort and the cook. It was about

three p.m. when we started our journey to Mandalay and we reached there next day at eight o'clock in the morning.

"The Mandalay Jail is built in the north-west corner of the Mandalay Fort. I was never taken out of this building except on one occasion when cholera broke out in the Jail; then, for ten weeks I was removed to Mikattala.

"My cell was on the first floor, and was twenty feet by twelve feet. This was partitioned off from a bigger room and the whole building was separated by a brick wall from the rest of the fort. I came to know later that this arrangement was not made specially for me. This portion was reserved for European prisoners and when it was decided that I was to be taken to Mandalay this compound with the cell was allotted to me. The compound around our cell was about one hundred and thirty feet long and fifty feet wide. I could move about freely in this space but no one was allowed in the compound except in the company of the jailer. Night and day the doors were fastened with heavy padlocks and at night my cell was also padlocked. Only when my time was nearly up did they cease to lock the door of the compound. The room that I have described above was like a wooden cage and as a matter of fact all barracks in the Mandalay prison were built of wood. In the room there was a writing-table, one hard chair and one canvas chair, an iron bedstead and two cupboards for books. The Gujarathi Brahmin prisoner who had accompanied me was sent back after a month as his term was up, and in his place was sent a prisoner from Yeravda Jail whose name was Kulkarni. He was serving a sentence of five years, but he obtained remission of about two years and was also sent back before my release. Then came a Brahmin prisoner from Upper India, who remained with me for the rest of the period.

"In Mandalay the ration of milk and ghee which was sanctioned at Ahamedabad continued. Along with wheat flour and rice we were also given a small portion of lentils. After a few weeks the Inspector General of Prisons ordered some fruit to be given to me; but the most significant change in my rations took place when my diabetes became acute. According to the Jail Manual of Burma a prisoner serving simple imprisonment is allowed to have his usual clothes (and also because I was regarded as a 'first-class misdemeanant'), I used to wear my dhoti and shirt just as at home. They also allowed me to buy kitchen utensils, but this was at my own

expense. In course of time I was also allowed to buy tea, coffee and betel nut.

"I do not know what would have happened to me if I had not been allowed to have books, because the room and the compound had become my entire world for the duration of my imprisonment—outside the compound, there was, so to speak, a big void. Even in the case of books there were three separate and sometimes contradictory orders issued. At first whatever books I wanted were given to me after being scrutinized by the Jail authorities. Of course, no books on current politics were sanctioned. In the same way, no newspapers or magazines, whether published in India or in England, whether in English or vernacular, were permitted. After a time, the order to allow all the books to remain in my possession was changed and I was allowed to have only four books at a time! When I complained about it to the Burma Government I was again allowed to have all the books I wanted with me as I was writing my *Gita Rahasya.* However, each book was carefully scrutinized and the pages counted, and their number was written on top on the frontispiece; underneath the Superintendent of the Jail used to sign. When I was released, the number of books in my possession was about four hundred. The paper which was given to me for writing was never in loose sheets. They were bound books with the pages counted and the number written as above. In the same way I was never given ink to write with, only lead pencils, and they too were sharpened beforehand. The only exception to this practice was when I wrote my monthly letter home. Then they gave me separate sheets of paper and also pen and ink.

"Even before I was imprisoned, a conviction was growing on me that the meaning of the Gita, adumbrated by all the many commentaries and expositions, was not the correct one. I had long wanted to give a concrete shape to my ideas on the meaning of the Gita, together with a comparative study of the Eastern and Western philosophies. I could do that only at Mandalay. I have now written a book on this subject in Marathi; it took me four to six months to write but much time was spent in thinking out its plan and then again in revising it. The manuscript is with the Government—they did not give it to me at the time of my release.

"As the weather in Mandalay is very hot, one cannot do the work of writing properly except in the cold season. Apart from writing

my book I spent some time in learning the French, German and Pali languages. Of course I need hardly say that it was a self-teaching attempt. I also spent some time on mathematical problems, astronomy and philosophy. I made stray notes on some other subjects also. Perhaps I might add that I acquired a rather greater knowledge of the German and the Pali languages than of French.

"I used to receive one letter from Poona a month and I used to send a reply back. However, any matter which was not strictly related to family affairs used to be cut out; nor was I allowed to write anything else in my replies. On the slightest suspicion, even of a single word, the Superintendent used to make me write the whole letter again. Apart from this correspondence I had no other contact with the outside world. Once in three months I was allowed to have a visitor who was not a member of my family, but I never took advantage of this concession, except in the case of my solicitor Raghavayya and my friends Dadasaheb Khaparde and Mr. Vijapurkar of Rangoon, who saw me as my legal advisers. All the conversations in these interviews took place in English and in the presence of the Superintendent of the Jail. Once the Lieutenant Governor of Burma, on a visit to the Jail, came to see me and made inquiries about me. If any other official visitor or Englishman happened to pay a visit to the Jail, the Superintendent never brought him to me. On the whole I was able to maintain good health. Once or twice a year I had a slight temperature but I did not suffer from any serious illness. However, my diabetes has become more acute than before and I have also lost five or six teeth, which at my age must be expected. My deafness has increased and my sight has also been affected, and I cannot see properly now. In one word, the shadow of death is slowly creeping on me. In the same way, the former enthusiasm and strength to work has diminished quite a lot and I have lost some weight. Apart from this, my body and mind are not much affected.

"As I was nearing the end of my imprisonment I began to think that my release was in sight, and accordingly I packed up my books and sent them on in May. According to the Jail regulations, a prisoner sentenced to transportation is usually sent home two months before the completion of the sentence. Therefore when on Monday, June 8th, early in the morning, at eight o'clock, the Jail Superintendent came into my room and asked me to collect my belongings, I

guessed what was going to happen. The same day at one o'clock in the afternoon I was put into a motor-car and taken to the station. In the mail train which left at two o'clock a compartment was reserved for us. At the approach to a station all the windows were shuttered. I had my red pugri, but was ordered to wear an ordinary cap until we reached Rangoon, and after that they ordered me to wear a roomal (turban)! In this way we were brought down to a small station near Rangoon, where the C.I.D. Police Commissioner and other officers were ready. They took me out of the train and drove me to the harbour. As it was very early in the morning, I do not think anybody recognized me. Also, great precautions were taken this time to keep my departure secret. Later on, I was told that all these arrangements were made by the Bombay C.I.D. officers who had come to Rangoon some time before. When my cook joined us with my luggage, we were put on the steamer and started our homeward journey in a military transport vessel, called *Mayo*. Whether this boat was going to Calcutta or would land us at Madras or would sail on to Bombay—I was not told a word about it. Neither did I care to make inquiries, as I was quite sure that I was on my way home. For the first time I saw the faces of Poona policemen on my boarding the boat. In this party there were Police Inspector Ring and Sergeant Jones, who were European officers; then there were Inspector Sadavarte, Jamadar Maruti Rao and Constable Date, who were Indians. They took me in their charge and the Rangoon Police left us. When I made inquiries I was told that the Poona Police party had arrived there the day before but were not allowed to move about anywhere and before evening fell they were all put on the boat.

"Usually this ship makes the journey to Madras in four or five days. As the sea was calm, we could have easily reached Madras on Friday or Saturday, but her speed was purposely cut down and we reached Madras on Monday evening. The Government had made arrangements and had fixed the time for the *Mayo*'s arrival in Madras harbour and therefore she had to waste two days at sea! Excepting Sadavarte, the entire Police party was down with seasickness. I am a good sailor, and the journey by sea did not affect me. There were no other passengers on the ship. Reaching Madras harbour, I was taken in a motor-launch and brought to the railway station in a car. Behind the brake van of the mail train was attached

a second-class compartment in which I was put. Immediately all the doors and windows were shuttered and the train started—the practice of shuttering the windows when we neared a station continued throughout the journey. Even now I was not told at what station we were going to get down. However one station before we detrained I was told that we were getting down at Hadapasar although it was not a scheduled stop (about three miles from Poona). As soon as the train stopped, the Poona District Police Superintendent arrived on the scene and he helped me and Sadarvarte to get down. Soon Mr. Gwyder also arrived. Outside the station two motor-cars had been kept ready, in one of which I took my seat, and we started our journey. Apparently the station master at Hadapasar was amazed at the mail train stopping at his station! As we were coming out he even asked me for my ticket! I could only point to the officer beside me.

"As the term of my imprisonment was over, my release was certain; but then again I was not sure what they were going to do next as I was brought to Poona so secretly and with all these precautions. I wondered if they would keep me in the Yerawada Jail for a month, but, then again, people were sure to get to know about my arrival, I thought, and so the Government would very probably release me straightaway. When we did not turn in the direction of Yerawada all my doubts vanished, and we arrived at Gayakwad Wada after midnight on Tuesday, June 16th. When we got down, Mr. Gwyder told me that the Government had kindly and unconditionally commuted the remaining portion of my sentence (about one month) and that I was now free. I asked him to convey my thanks to the Government. The watchman was not, however, quite sure whether to open the door to his rightful master, as I was accompanied by police officers. Only when he woke up Dhondopant, who came to the door, did he open it and I was able to enter my own house."

The remarkable feature of this interview is the complete absence of any bitterness against the Government for the treatment he had received in the jail. Many of his friends who may have wanted to make political capital out of his long incarceration were surprised at his attitude. It was no secret in India that the British Government was seriously thinking at one time—on the occasion of the Delhi Durbar of King George V in 1911—of releasing Tilak. But Lord Sydenham, then Governor of Bombay, stoutly opposed this move

and the Indian leader had to serve three more years in the infernal heat of Mandalay before he was finally released in June 1914.

V. R. Kulkarni, the convict cook who was longest in company with Tilak, recently died, but has left some very interesting and valuable memoirs of his experiences of prison life with Tilak. The daily routine of his distinguished fellow-prisoner used to be, he records, "to get up very early in the morning and after a wash, to sit up erect in his bed, his eyes closed, completely immersed in meditation. He would sit like this for about an hour and a half. Sometimes he would recite Sanskrit verses which at first I did not understand. In the cold season I used to keep hot water ready for him and also his towel and soap, but he disapproved of this. He would say, 'You are a prisoner, so am I. You must not make a fuss of me, I don't like it. And besides, the authorities might take objection to it.' Then he would have his morning tea and immediately after begin his studies. At nine o'clock he had his bath, always cold except in winter, when he would allow himself the luxury of a hot bath.

"One day Tilak said to me, 'Here I have plenty of time. It's not like Poona where I could hardly get time for a meal. Now listen to me. Both of us happen to be Brahmans, so we must not eat before we offer the daily oblations to the Sun and recite our gaitri prayer.' Ever after that we followed this practice without a break.

"As time went on the restrictions on Lokamanya's rations became much less stringent. He was allowed wheat flour, rice, lentils and some fruit. He was also allowed the supplies of ghee sent from Poona. But my ration was not the same as his; it was mostly very low quality rice, and my ration of lentils used to be full of vermin. When he came to know about this, he asked me not to use my own ration but to eat the food I used to cook for him. It was most embarrassing to me as I thought Lokamanya was eating less in order to save the food for me. One day he said, 'Look here, you must not eat that wretched rice. You will fall ill, and there is no need for you to eat it. I get fruit, milk and other things; you don't. You must eat as I tell you.' He used to feed the sparrows with whatever rice or lentils were left over. The birds became so accustomed to him that they used to hop about the room, sit on his writing-table, and even perch on his shoulders when he sat down for dinner. One day the Jail Superintendent paid him an unexpected

visit and was most surprised to see the Lokamanya surrounded by a swarm of these birds. 'How is it that they are not frightened of you, Mr. Tilak?' he asked in astonishment. 'I don't know, but perhaps because I don't eat them nor frighten them away. Whenever possible I feed them,' replied the Lokamanya. 'After all the sparrows are innocent birds; but even against venomous creatures like cobras, I bear no ill-will and they also are not frightened of me. My heart is free from hatred or fear of any creature of God's creation.' The European Superintendent stood there, as though transfixed, for quite a while, and went away without a word more." Did the picture of Tilak playing with the sparrows evoke familiar memories in him? Was not St. Francis of Assisi also kind to the birds and did he not have the same fellow-feeling for God's creation? Whatever the Superintendent's thoughts may have been, this episode strikingly reveals a little known side of Tilak's nature, his love of birds and animals, and that sublime love for humanity, in which there is no room for hatred or ill-will against anybody, black or white, yellow or brown.

Kulkarni has narrated many interesting and touching incidents from the years in Mandalay Jail. Of Tilak's health he says, "The only serious malady he suffered from was sugar diabetes. But he never took any drugs to cure it. He controlled it by a special diet which he had discovered himself. Whenever the trouble became acute he would cut out all sugar from his tea and coffee and eat only bread (made of sattu barley) and fried in butter. Yoghourt and sour milk were his favourites. He was not a gourmet and used to say, 'I eat to live, not like many people, who live to eat.' On one occasion I made his Indian soup of lentils, forgetting to add salt to it. He ate his meal without complaining and returned to his study. When I ate mine I discovered my mistake and asked his pardon for my negligence. He laughed and said, 'To tell you the truth I did not notice the absence of salt in the soup. As far as I am concerned you have been guilty of no negligence and therefore there is no question of forgiving you.'

"At six o'clock in the evening we used to be locked in. Then Tilak used to tell me all sorts of historical and religious stories and sometimes simply humorous yarns. He was a wonderful raconteur and it was a treat to listen to him. My only regret is that I cannot remember them all.

"One day the Governor of Burma came to inspect the jail and paid a visit to Tilak Maharaj. He was accompanied by the Collector, Jailor and other prison officers. They mistook me for the Lokamanya and took off their hats and said 'Good morning' to me. I said in Hindustani that Tilak Maharaj was inside and that I did not understand English. In the meantime the Lokamanya came down and when the Governor told him how he mistook the cook for the great leader all of them laughed heartily. Then the party went upstairs and in the course of conversation Tilak Maharaj told them that he was studying German. The Governor seemed to be pleased to hear this and asked him if he would kindly give a test to his daughter who was taking special lessons in German. He readily agreed. All this had a curious effect on the jail officers. Apparently they did not like the Governor becoming so familiar with this political prisoner. Perhaps they thought the Lokamanya would try to secure special concessions by praising the girl's knowledge. How little did they know of the high character and integrity of their charge! As agreed, the girl came the next day with her father. Tilak examined her and frankly told the Governor that her knowledge of the German language was not up to the mark. This greatly impressed the prison officials as it convinced them that Tilak was not an ordinary felon who would take advantage of a situation to secure concessions. Thenceforward their attitude towards him changed considerably and they took extra special care whenever he became ill with an attack of malaria or some such disease."

On the whole Tilak's health was good while he was in Mandalay. He had a strong constitution and his regular habits helped him a lot, so that he required medical attention only occasionally. But Kulkarni often suffered from fever. He writes, "Lokamanya nursed me in my illness with the care and affection of my parents. He did not send me to the jail hospital. In my days of illness he used to do the cooking himself, feed me first, and then eat his own meal. Whenever I think of the Lokamanya a hundred and one memories crowd into my mind and I begin to cry. Many a time he would go hungry in order to save enough food for me; indeed he was more than a father to me.

"I was sentenced to five years but Lokamanya made representations for me on the completion of my three years and secured two

years of remission for me. I really did not want to leave him, but he pressed me to go home.

"When the day of my departure came, I was very much upset, but he consoled me and blessed me and asked me to go to Poona to see his family. I said, 'Will they believe me when I say I have come from you?' Whereupon Tilak Maharaj gave me a tooth which had come out, which I was to give to Dhondopant, his nephew.

"From Mandalay I was taken to the Yerawada Jail at Poona and was given a railway ticket for my village and put on the train. An officer sternly warned me against visiting the Gayakwad Wada—Tilak's residence in the city. I went home first, but quietly returned to Poona and met Dhondopant and showed him the tooth, which easily established my identity. I met Lokamanya's wife and gave her all the news, and then went back to my village."

Many of Tilak's friends and political associates have also written their reminiscences but none has surpassed the simple and unsophisticated story told by Kulkarni. He brings out the abiding humanity in Tilak, who was completely unconscious of his greatness and accepted his lot without a murmur. He was cheerful and jovial and made light of the hardships of his prison life. When the companionship of his peers was denied him, he made friends of humbler people and devoted his time to learning new languages and produced a new and novel interpretation of the Gita. His letters, sixty in number, to his nephew, Dhondopant, written from the Central Jail of Mandalay, also reveal the homely and tender side of Tilak. The correspondence is mainly concerned with the books he wanted Dhondopant to send him from Poona, the concern he felt for the health of many friends whom he had left behind, the arrangements for the education of his sons and daughters, the management of the estate of Baba Maharaj, for which Tilak was acting as a trustee; condolences to the families of friends who had died; directions and suggestions to his legal advisers for the Privy Council appeal, and other private problems. He has treated all these matters with rare composure and equanimity. But when it came to the question of books in his library he writes with filial love; his heart seemed to ache at his separation from his favourite authors.

Hardly any of Tilak's correspondence with his colleagues has survived. As he was considered to be "enemy number one" of

British Rule in India he not only had his letters intercepted by the authorities but his correspondents were regarded as political suspects and many of them became objects of special attention by the C.I.D. To avoid embarrassment to his friends Tilak used to send important messages by word of mouth through trusted lieutenants like D. V. Gokhale to Calcutta, Madras, Lahore, and other places. This naturally did away with the necessity of writing letters. However, whenever he had to write, his standing advice to his friends was to burn his letters as soon as they had read them. In spite of all this, one of his devoted followers, S. V. Bapat, the editor of Tilak's reminiscences, managed to collect a number of Tilak's letters, hoping to publish them later. They were unfortunately destroyed when the house in which they were kept for safe custody was gutted by fire.

Writing on March 2nd, 1911, Tilak says, "I have just finished writing my book on the Gita and have given it the title *Gita Rahasya*. In it I have expounded some original ideas, which, in many ways, will be presented to the people for the first time. I have shown in this book how the Hindu religious philosophy helps to solve the moral issues (involved in everyday life). To a certain extent my line of argument runs parallel to the line of thinking followed by Green in his book on Ethics. However I do not accept that the basis of morality is the greatest good of the greatest number or the human inspiration. What I have done in *Gita Rahasya* is to prove, by comparing the philosophy of Gita and the philosophy of the West, that ours, to put it at the lowest, is in no way inferior to theirs. I had been thinking about the Gita for the last twenty years, and the ideas which I propose to expound are challenging—so far no one has dared to put them forward. I have yet to cite quite a few supporting arguments from books which are not with me at present, which I can do only after my release."

Although Tilak was essentially a man of a philosophical turn of mind and took all things in his stride, he broke down at the news of the death of his wife, Satyabhamabai. To the vast Indian public she was completely unknown, and indeed she seems to have lived only for Tilak. She never took part in any of his public activities nor did she appear with him on any public platform. Tilak himself did not encourage women to take an active part in politics or to risk imprisonment. Brought up in the old tradition, he was of opinion that

woman's proper sphere of activity was her family and home, although he wanted women to take an intelligent interest in public affairs. Satyabhamabai was an intensely religious woman and knew all the Hindu epics like the Ramayan and Mahabharat, even though she could hardly read or write. Her husband tried to give her lessons when they were first married, but soon afterwards he went to stay in the college hostel and this experiment in coaching came to an end.

Tilak was deeply shocked and grieved at the death of his wife and wrote to his nephew:

"Your wire was a very great and heavy blow. I am used to taking misfortune calmly, but I confess that the present one shook me considerably . . . what grieved me most is my enforced absence from her side at this critical time. . . . One chapter of my life is closed and I am afraid it won't be long before another will be. Let the last rites be duly performed and her remains sent to Allahabad or Benares or any other place she may have desired. Carry out to the letter all her last wishes. . . . I believe Mathu and Durgi (Tilak's daughters) are still there (in Poona). They, as well as Rambhau and Bapu (Tilak's sons) must have felt the bereavement keenly, especially at a time when I am away. Console them in my name and see that Rambhau and Bapu do not get dejected. Let them remember that I was left an orphan when I was much younger than either of them. Misfortunes should brace us for greater self-dependence. Both Rambhau and Bapu should therefore take a lesson from this bereavement, and if they do that I am sure God will not forsake them. The inevitable must be faced boldly. As regards her possessions and valuables, make a list of them and keep them with you under lock and key until my release. . . . Above all, face the situation courageously yourself, for there is no one else on whom the children can depend in this critical state. 'May God help you all' is all that I can wish and pray from this distant place. With love to the children and yourself. Yours affectionately, B. G. Tilak."

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THE HERO'S RETURN

As night fell on June 17th, 1914, the citizens of Poona had little idea of the drama which was to be played before the morning. Flickering paraffin lamps dimly lit the streets and only served to make the darkness more frightening; in the stillness the only sounds were the noise of a bat flying in the darkness or the distant bark of a stray dog. An hour after midnight, a large police car drew up outside 486 Narayan Peth. Out stepped two officers, looking like phantoms in the dim light; they opened the door of the car and helped a man to get out. The senior of the officers, a European (Mr. Gwyder), saluted and said: "Sir, the Government has graciously commuted the rest of your sentence unconditionally and you are now free." The man so addressed, bowed, asked him to convey his thanks to the Government, and then stepped forward to enter the house.

The watchman, oblivious of what was happening outside the main gate, was dozing on his *charpoy* and did not at first hear the rattling of the heavy chain. Then, stirring, he called out, "Who is it?" The watchman's words were spoken in fear and annoyance, but to the man at the door they were like a warm welcome, for this was his return home after six long years. With emotion he answered, "I am Balwantrao Tilak, open the door!" The watchman laughed incredulously. This couldn't be Tilak. It was more likely to be a Government search party, and he knew what *their* business would be. He had been told nothing about Tilak coming home; this must be a hoax. The watchman could hardly be blamed, for the Government had given no warning to Tilak's family that he would be restored to them that night. His release had been kept a closely guarded secret literally to the last minute, for Gwyder's words were the first notice of his release that Tilak himself had. To make matters worse, the police officer, when he ordered the watchman to open

the door, spoke in a typical authoritative voice which only served to confirm his suspicions. The watchman woke up Dhondopant Vidwans, Tilak's nephew, and at last brought him to the main gate; then the doors were opened and Tilak walked into his own home after six years.

Tilak in the midst of his family and his people again! Messengers hurried to tell the news to his friends, who, in spite of the late hour and the threat of rain in the air, came post-haste to greet their long-lost friend and leader. Hundreds arrived to welcome and salute him, some with garlands and bouquets improvised on the spur of the moment. All through the night the stream of visitors continued. All who came put their heads on Tilak's feet, then sat down wherever they could find room, and gazed reverently at their leader, their eyes streaming with tears of joy. At four o'clock in the morning Tilak at last went to bed to snatch a few hours sleep.

Telegrams and messages began to pour in from all over India and from London, Paris, Tokyo, New York and many other world centres. From early in the morning crowds besieged the Gaikwar Wada shouting greetings: "Tilak Maharaj-ki-jai"; "Long live Lokamanya." Poona, and with it the whole country, was filled with joy and happiness. The period of drought was over; the life-giving spirit had at last returned to the parched land of India. New hopes and expectations sprang up again in the hearts of the people.

Tilak was fifty-two when he was transported to Mandalay; he was now fifty-eight. By Indian standards he was getting old and his prolonged, almost solitary, confinement, coupled with the loss of his wife, whom he so dearly loved, had greatly undermined his health; he was a sick man when he was released. But his spirit was as young as ever and his will indomitable. Many of his close friends and relatives urged him to retire from politics and devote the evening of his life to writing books on philosophy and religion. To one such friend he said, "To tell you honestly, nothing would give me more satisfaction than to be surrounded by books and working on some mathematical problem or writing a comparative study of Eastern and Western philosophical thought. If India were free I would have been happy to be a professor in a college and devote my life to teaching students. But unfortunately, India is not free and my first duty is therefore to work for her liberation. I read and write

for recreation and diversion from politics. Please do not try to persuade me to give up my life's work. It seems that I am destined to die as a politician and I have ungrudgingly accepted the decree of my fate."

There were some who expected to find Tilak a changed man, ready to placate the bureaucracy; others expected him to give up politics altogether. Somehow a few high-ranking officials had convinced themselves that when Tilak returned home he would find himself a forgotten man, shunned by the people and reduced to a cipher in politics. What they saw was very different. An eye-witness account of Tilak's first day as a free man says, "The day grew dark and deepened into night, but the huge crowds which surged in and around the Gaikwar Wada dwindled not at all, nor did their ardour diminish in the slightest." Tilak could get no rest from the daily increasing strain of visitors and it was therefore decided to hold a grand public reception in his honour a few days later. The reception was held on June 23rd, only six days after his release. The excitement among the people was intense. Friends and admirers from up-country arrived in scores and long before the time for the meeting, the large square in the Gaikwar Wada was overflowing with an enormous mass of humanity. More than seven thousand men and women attended the reception. To quote the eye-witness account again, "At the approach of evening showers began to fall, but no one moved, no one felt disturbed, no one even noticed that the joyful sky was moved to tears! The all-absorbing thought in the mind of the multitude was heart-felt gratitude to the Almighty for restoring Tilak to the people. And amidst affectionate greetings, punctuated by deafening cheers, the people showered their tributes on their leader in chaplets and garlands. The whole assembly was deeply moved as each garland that was presented recalled some incident in the national struggle through which the people had passed. The garlands presented on behalf of the journals which the Press Act had suspended and in the name of imprisoned patriots called forth the loudest cheers."

The bureaucracy had confidently hoped that Tilak on his return would find himself forgotten by the people. The spontaneous reception he had that evening showed how mistaken were those hopes. The affection and love of his people overwhelmed Tilak. For once his stoic temperament gave way; he was moved to tears.

In a short speech of thanks, Tilak declared his decision to rededicate his life to the service of India: "When after six years absence I returned home and began to renew my acquaintance with the world I found myself in the position of Rip Van Winkle. The authorities kept me in such rigorous seclusion that they seemed to want me to forget the world and be forgotten by it. I cannot tell you how happy I am to see that the people have not forgotten me. I can only assure you all that separation for six long years could not diminish my love for you and that I am ready and willing to serve you in the same manner, in the same relation, and in the same capacity as I did before—although I may perhaps have to modify the course a little."

This characteristic declaration greatly alarmed the Government officials, who had hoped that Tilak would be a subdued man after six years of imprisonment and that they would be able to enjoy peace and quiet. They therefore decided to strike again. First, the Government issued a Press note which declared Tilak to be a confirmed seditionist and asked the people to have nothing to do with him. Anyone disregarding this "advice", the Government warned, was liable to incur its very severe displeasure. In order to see that the Government wishes were respected the authorities opened two special police centres at either side of Tilak's house, and a note was made of the names of all visitors. In addition the District Magistrate of Poona issued on his own authority an order forbidding anyone to exhibit publicly "pictures of persons convicted of sedition", or to "garland them or their relations in prominent places".

A great deal of water had flowed under the bridge since Tilak's conviction: Viceroys and Governors had been changed; a new King (George V) had come to the Throne and, above all, the partition of Bengal, the root cause of the recent trouble in India, had been annulled—the "settled fact" had been unsettled. But the vindictive attitude of the officials towards Tilak had not altered. All other policies might change but not the Government's policy towards him. The Indian Press and public protested strongly against this vendetta but the Government policy remained unaffected until Keir Hardie, M.P., took up the issue with the Secretary of State for India, Lord Crewe.

While Tilak was thus feeling his way and preparing himself to start his political work by picking up the old threads, an event

occurred in August which shook the world. The First World War broke out in Europe. Over-night Indian politics took on a completely different aspect. Even the Government officials felt the impact and for the first time hinted at their willingness to revise their attitude towards Tilak. However, mistaken ideas of prestige prevented the bureaucracy from doing the right thing by immediately removing the restrictions imposed on him. Pride demanded that the first open move should come from him. This was, indeed, suggested to him through a third party. Tilak was too great a man and too great a realist to be worried by considerations of false dignity and self-importance. He agreed to issue a manifesto which would declare his loyalty to the throne and also clarify his position *vis-à-vis* the British Government. In return the Government of Bombay agreed to cancel the order of June 25th and to close down the special police centres which they had established near Tilak's house.

He issued his famous manifesto in the form of an open letter to the Press, at once manly in tone and chivalrous in spirit. He never gave up his faith in the adage that "England's difficulty is India's opportunity". But he knew when and how to exploit that difficulty and turn it into a real opportunity for India. To dispel all doubt over his attitude towards political violence Tilak declared, "I have no hesitation in saying that the acts of violence which have been committed in the different parts of India are not only repugnant to me, but have, in my opinion, only unfortunately retarded to a great extent the pace of our political progress. Whether looked at from an individual or from a public point of view they deserve, as I have said before on several occasions, to be equally condemned". Then he declared, "At such a crisis it is the duty of every Indian, be he great or small, rich or poor, to support and assist His Majesty's Government to the best of his ability". He fully appreciated the prime cause of Britain's entry into the war for he declared that she had been "compelled by the action of the German Emperor to take up arms in defence of a weaker state, whose frontiers have been violated in defiance of several treaty obligations and of repeated promises of integrity". He thus gave his full support to Britain and her allies, but not at the cost of India's claims. While strongly repudiating any suggestion of disloyalty Tilak affirmed in unambiguous terms India's right to Swaraj. "I may state at once," he

said, "that we are trying in India, as the Irish home-rulers have been doing in Ireland, for a reform of the system of administration."

This frank and generous attitude of Tilak to a Government which had been consistently unfair to him and had so often tried to crush him will be remembered as one of the rare instances of political magnanimity in the history of India.

True to his promise Tilak devoted most of his time to urging people to help the war effort. The "declaration of loyalty" cleared away a great deal of misunderstanding—so much so that even the Anglo-Indian newspaper, the *Advocate of India* of Bombay, spoke of Tilak as "one of our loyalest and truest friends" and called upon his detractors to "admit their mistake and make at the earliest possible moment the *amende honorable*".

In appreciation of Tilak's manifesto of loyalty the Government also cancelled the restrictions imposed on him. On all sides it was hoped that this would usher in a new era of co-operation between the bureaucracy and the Mahratta leader.

Tilak was quick to sense the effect of his declaration on the Government, whose attitude towards him was now to some degree modified. His action gave hope and satisfaction to the great majority of the people. But there were many in his own camp who did not understand the deeper strategic meaning of Tilak's declaration, and accused him of weakness. Like the officials, some of his followers had come to regard Tilak as the embodiment of hatred of everything British. Theirs was the simple biblical dichotomy: he who is not for us is against us. They argued, "The enemy of our enemy is our friend". To them the subtle play of light and shade did not exist. For a time they thought that the loyalty declaration was the beginning of the end of Tilak's political career. He was an idol of the people, a power in the country and a terror to the bureaucracy because of his uncompromising opposition to the British Raj. But what use would he be now if he turned a somersault, became a loyalist and co-operated with the hated foreign administration? This sort of argument passed in those days for pure nationalism and drew easy cheers and brought spurious popularity. But Tilak's actions were not based on the hope of ephemeral popular applause; they were the outcome of a deep and sound appreciation of the situation. He was a general who knew when and where to attack the enemy and when to fall back on prepared positions. We must

remember that the "official boycott" and the strict watch kept on him and his visitors greatly restricted opportunities for discussion and for the exchange of ideas with his friends and political associates. Without freedom of movement Tilak found it extremely difficult to decide on the next step and prepare his political programme. Wherever there is movement there is opportunity, he thought, and set himself to secure the freedom to move about unhampered among the people. In his offer of co-operation with the Government in this new situation created by war he saw a psychological bridge which would allow the officials to overcome their distrust of him and restore to him this freedom. His declaration of loyalty was a strategic move which, as he expected, achieved its purpose and gave him a vantage point from which to prepare for a new attack, which came in less than eighteen months after his release.

Not only did Tilak issue his declaration of loyalty but he proved his bona fides by writing extensively in *Kesari* urging the youth of the country to enlist in the Army. He pointed out that this was a great opportunity for young men to get military training and experience which would stand them in good stead in defending the country when freedom came. Before his imprisonment, Tilak had strongly condemned the Government policy of barring educated Indians from military service and enforcing the Arms Act (so making it difficult to possess firearms or in general to develop a robust attitude to life); he called it the policy of emasculating the Indian people. He looked upon the war in Europe as a welcome opportunity for India to show its mettle and prove its capacity to fight. He suggested that the Government should raise a citizen army and recruit on a large scale; the Moderates were also in agreement with Tilak on this issue, but the Government hesitated and in the end rejected the suggestion. It is strange that although England was fighting a life and death struggle the Indian bureaucrats seemed less anxious to accept help from real Indian leaders; did they fear that it would give them a lever for their political demands? The Government sent recruiting officers into the countryside to enlist men from among the classes which can only be described as poverty-stricken, ignorant and politically backward. The Government attitude clearly suggested that they wanted not educated and patriotic Indians in the army but mere cannon fodder.

This attitude drew strong criticism from all quarters; it was

said that if the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Mr. Asquith, could be told how sincerely India desired to fight for the cause of democracy and how vast were the manpower resources she was eagerly offering, England would have been spared the need to introduce conscription and even, perhaps, the need for American help. Little happened until Lloyd George became Prime Minister in December 1916, and instructed the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, to make every effort to catch the imagination of the Indian people and rouse their enthusiasm. But Lord Chelmsford did not possess the warmth of feeling to rouse popular enthusiasm; his actions proved a series of blunders which ended by discouraging Indians and making them suspicious of the Government's war aims.

It is a curious commentary on the mentality of British bureaucrats in India that in a country with a population of 300,000,000 the Government appealed for a force of 6,000 young men for a volunteer army, whereas Tilak had offered to raise an army of six millions and more if need be. He could see through the game Chelmsford's government was playing but true to his promise he urged the youth of India to join in whole-heartedly, making powerful recruiting speeches in Poona, Bombay and elsewhere. He pointed out to the Government, however, that their appeal was likely to fall flat, for it lacked any touch of imagination and generosity. There was, for instance, no promise of political advance nor were Indians assured of commissions in the volunteer army.

In Bombay he declared, "If my grey hair and age are no disqualification I am prepared to take my place in the firing line". This made a tremendous impression on his youthful audience and eight hundred and fifty young men who had recently returned to India from South Africa volunteered on the spot. Like Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi had also undertaken an extensive tour of Gujarath calling upon the people to rally round the British flag. One wonders if the officials were frightened at the prospect of the combination of Tilak and Gandhi, two great forces in the country. It is a strange fact, and an inexplicable one, that in this supreme crisis for Britain her agents in India behaved so unwisely that their every action gave the impression that they had no real wish to accept India's help.

The appeal for the defence of India force was followed by the Defence of India Act. Only a few hours before Tilak made his powerful appeal to the Indian youth in Bombay the Government of

the Punjab served on him an order prohibiting him from entering that Province. The example of Sir Michael O'Dwyer, the Governor of the Punjab, was followed by the Commissioner of Delhi, who prohibited Tilak from entering Delhi Province. These orders seemed most mysterious as Tilak had made no plans for travelling to the Punjab or to Delhi! The leaders of the Indian Press, bearing in mind Lloyd George's appeal, waited on the Viceroy to ask him to repeal the obnoxious Press Act which was hampering the country in its effort to give substantial help to the British Government. But the deputation was disappointed and drew a blank.

At this point events must be anticipated a little by mentioning the Delhi War Conference held in April 1918. Most of the political leaders from all over India were invited to it; they included Mahatma Gandhi, but not Tilak. This was pointed out at the Conference and grudging amends were made in Bombay when the Governor, Lord Willingdon, included Tilak among the Provincial leaders who were called in for consultation. Tilak supported the Government resolution on recruiting Indians in the Army, and went on to add that the enthusiasm of the people would be better roused if the appeal was coupled with a promise of home rule. To Willingdon the mention of "home rule" was like a red rag to a bull. He peremptorily asked the speaker to sit down. Tilak promptly told His Excellency that if he was not allowed to express his mind freely he had no option but to walk out, and as he left the Conference Hall many others followed him, including Mahatma Gandhi, B. G. Horniman, editor of the *Bombay Chronicle*, S. R. Bomanji, a business magnate, Jamnadas Dwarkadas, a leading theosophist, and N. C. Kelkar, editor of the *Mahratta*.

Gangadharao Despande of Belgaum has described an interesting episode in connection with this Bombay War Conference. The day before it was due to take place Tilak invited Gandhi to discuss the line he was going to adopt in the Conference. He showed Gandhi a short speech he had prepared, and asked him if he could give his backing to the suggestions made in it. The speech was in support of the Government's appeal for recruits but it was coupled with a request that the Government should make a definite declaration that at the end of the war India would receive home rule. Mahatma Gandhi, who stood for unconditional aid to the British Government,

refused to back this conditional support of Tilak's. The two leaders argued for some time without coming to an agreement and Gandhi got up to take his leave. Tilak walked with him to the lift and placing his hand on Gandhi's shoulder said, "Never mind, I will not press you to support my plea. But I am sure you will come to my conclusion when you have suffered as much as I have and when you realize the workings of the bureaucratic mind in India." At this point Gandhi turned to Tilak and quietly said, "Tilak Maharaj, I am sorry I cannot agree with you, but now I have decided not to address the meeting". And he went home and wrote to the Governor telling him of his decision. Next day when the conference met and the list of speakers was given to the leaders who attended it, the name of Gandhi had been scored out with a red pencil. This drew everybody's attention and there was much speculation about Gandhi's eleventh-hour decision not to speak. Tilak appreciated Gandhi's gesture, for his silence was perhaps more eloquent than the speech he had intended to make.

A leader with less vision would have lost his temper at the rebuff which the Governor had administered; but not Tilak. He naturally protested strongly at the discourteous behaviour of Lord Willingdon and exposed the sham nature of the so-called War Conference, but his feeling about the whole affair was one more of pity than of anger. In cold-shouldering Tilak's genuine offer to help the British to prosecute the war the Government showed itself ignorant of the political psychology of India. Tilak understood much more deeply than any official the true importance of Indo-British relations. He accepted the political fact that for some time to come the destinies of his country were indissolubly bound with those of Great Britain. Moreover, he recognized that the war had forced the world to choose between democracy and despotism; the triumph of Germany would mean the triumph of militarism and dictatorship. On this issue his views were definite and decisive—he wanted democracy to win.

The people of Bombay, however, were much enraged by what had happened, and on June 16th they held a public meeting of protest with Mahatma Gandhi in the chair. Gandhi said, "I strongly condemn the behaviour of Lord Willingdon. Lokamanya Tilak was addressing the conference according to the assurances given to Mr. Kelkar. To interrupt him abruptly was both unmannerly and unfair. I must state emphatically that this insult to

the Lokamanya will greatly harm the Empire cause." Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the future founder of Pakistan, also spoke and protested strongly against the Governor's attitude and behaviour. He added, "I doubt if the Government really cares for the people's co-operation".

Tilak, too, spoke and created a sensation by declaring that he was sending to Mahatma Gandhi a deposit receipt for Rs.50,000 to prove his sincerity about the recruiting campaign. He said, "The Government doubts our honesty, but are they themselves honest? I have enough evidence to prove their insincerity and dishonesty. I ask them, who will help them merely to make the bonds of slavery tighter still? I am prepared to recruit five thousand men if the Government assures our young men of higher posts and commissions in the Army. And if I fail to fulfil the full quota of five thousand, I am prepared to pay Rs.100 for each recruit needed to make up the number. As an earnest of my pledge I am sending to Gandhi a deposit receipt for Rs.50,000." The next day, as promised, the money was sent. This sensational offer took the Government by surprise. They could not, however, accept it as they were unwilling to agree to give Indians commissions in the Army.

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BACK IN THE ARENA

While Tilak was thus engaged in recruiting young men for the Army and giving his moral and material help to Britain he was also conducting his agitation for a Congress compromise. On his return home after six years' absence he found that all political activity in the country had come to a standstill and that his Nationalist Party had almost disintegrated. The situation had indeed become desperate. "Boycott, political or economic, ceased to count as a factor in practical politics . . . national schools and colleges were deserted. The Samitis (patriotic societies) were suppressed. Arbitration courts collapsed. Wholesale repression drove the movement underground, bringing terrorism in its train. The terrorists were vigorously hunted. Popular leaders found their way either to jail or to self-imposed exile. The National Congress with its ever-dwindling enthusiasm and attendance met only to register the growing depression of the Moderate leaders. . . . The octopus-like Press Act strangled all freedom of writing. National literature was mostly proscribed, especially all that described Mr. Tilak's personality or preached his principles."[1] Arabindo Ghose, Tilak's right-hand man in Bengal described the situation thus: "A hush had fallen over the country. No man seemed to know which way to move and from all sides came the question, what shall we do? What is there that we can do? What next?"

Tilak could read this question in the face of nearly every leader who went to see him. The Indian skies looked gloomy with dark clouds of depression and helplessness. He decided, therefore, to sketch out a tentative political programme which would revive the drooping spirits of his followers and give the country a new lead.

[1] *Lokamanya B. G. Tilak*, by D. V. Athalye.

His trusted followers, men like Khaparde of Amaraoti, Gangadharrao Deshpande of Belgaum, Bapuji Aney of Yeotmal, Dr. Moonje of Nagpur, and many local Poona leaders like N. C. Kelkar, J. S. Karandikar, K. P. Khadilkar, L. B. Bhopatkar and S. K. Damale were invited to an informal meeting at which the principal heads of a programme were settled. They were: (1) the Congress compromise; (2) the revival and reorganization of the Nationalist Party; and (3) the starting of the home-rule movement. Side by side with this work Tilak was also engaged in revising and publishing a new commentary on the Bhagawat-Gita which he had written in Mandalay, the *Gita Rahasya*, and collecting material to file a suit against Sir Valentine Chirol for the many defamatory remarks he had made in his publication *Indian Unrest*.

Ever since the Surat split in 1908 a desire to reunite the two wings of the Congress was always present in the country and serious—but unsuccessful—attempts at reunion were being made in 1910 by Sir William Wedderburn and others. A few of the leaders on both sides had also suggested various ingenious compromises to bring the two parties to a common platform; unfortunately the Moderate leaders who controlled the Congress (particularly the Bombay group) had set their faces against any compromise with the New Party and had succeeded in keeping them at arm's length for all these years. Tilak's release brought India the first real hope of a compromise and a re-united Congress. At this time Mrs. Annie Besant, the President of the Theosophical Society, had also begun to take a keen interest in Indian politics. Seizing the opportunity presented by Tilak's changed attitude, she took a hand in bridging the gulf between the Moderates and the Nationalists and approached Sir Pherozeshah Mehta and Gokhale, though, as it will be seen, without success. In the absence of Tilak and other Nationalist leaders the Moderates had made the Congress such a closed shop that it was virtually impossible to become a delegate except on their terms. Article 20, in particular, made the Constitution so rigid and narrow that it had killed the national character of the organization and reduced the Congress to the level of a social gathering of old maids holding a reunion dinner. There were the same prim and proper speeches, polite jokes and cheerless smiles. Occasionally their synthetic anger against some bureaucratic action rose to a "high degree of heat" and they urged the Government not to do it

again—on very special occasions they even "protested" against the administration. By and large, however, the party managers took good care to see that the temperature never rose too high.

The years 1908 and 1909 saw the most savage type of repression in India. Men like Tilak were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment, others were deported without trial on "*ex parte* and untested information", public meetings were ruthlessly attacked and dispersed by the police, heavy sureties were demanded from newspapers (and soon confiscated), many other papers were forcibly closed down after the imprisonment of the editors and publishers—public life in India was, indeed, completely strangled and choked. But it never drew one word of "immoderate" condemnation from the Moderates. The almost identically worded resolutions on the subject of "coercion" at the twenty-third and twenty-fourth Congresses (Madras, 1908 and Lahore, 1909) made such cold reading that many wondered whether such men as Mehta and Gokhale, who dominated the national organization, had any real claim to political understanding and statesmanship. The resolutions speak for themselves: "This Congress respectfully prays that the persons recently deported . . . be set at liberty. . . . This Congress deplores the circumstances which have led to the passing of Act VII of 1908 and Act XVI of 1908 . . . but having regard to their drastic character and to the fact that a sudden emergency alone can afford any justification for such exceptional legislation, this Congress expresses its earnest hope that these enactments will only have a temporary existence in the Indian Statute Book." This snivelling apologetic tone is the measure of how low the Congress had sunk in the last few years. Tilak now bent all his energies to raising it to a position of power and prestige; to achieve this end he determined to enter it at all costs.

Mrs. Besant was a woman of dynamic personality; her militant. nature impelled her to work for the re-admission of the Nationalist Party to the Congress for, she realized, its absence from the National platform had blighted all political work and reduced the Congress to a cipher. In December, three weeks before the Congress met in Madras, she went to Poona with Mr. Subbarao Pantalu, the secretary of the reception committee of the Madras Congress, and interviewed Tilak, who explained that the so-called Congress creed was not in itself an insuperable obstacle to a compromise, since the Moderates had only accepted it with some reluctance in the first

place. "There is now no question about the creed. That creed is not the creation of Moderates, who would have gone back on it if we had not set up at Surat a strong opposition against receding from the Calcutta resolution about self-government. They wanted merely some reforms in the administration and not a change in its form. Rightly speaking, it is we, therefore, who have forced the creed on the Moderates, whatever they may say to the contrary. The only other question of importance is the cliquish character now imposed on the Congress by restricting the right of electing delegates only to the Committees recognized by the Moderates. If they are prepared to yield on this point and keep the doors of election open to all, I think we may accept the proposal of inviting all the parties in the Congress this year." Furthermore, it was the Moderates who had closed the door of admission to the Nationalists by restricting the right of election in their constitution. Tilak writes to Khaparde, "I told her that the real point at issue was that we should have perfect freedom to have our delegates elected by our people without any recognition from the other party. As an example I cited the case of parties in England and pointed out that no Liberal in England would care to be elected by a Conservative constituency nor would the latter elect him. Mrs. Besant saw the point clearly and said that we were right in urging that this freedom should be granted to us. If she is elected to the Subjects Committee she means to move an amendment to the constitution to secure this liberty to us next year. So the net result of the interview is that nothing could be done this year as no one is willing to face the Mehta opposition."[1]

Mrs. Besant and Subbarao also interviewed Gokhale, the Moderate leader, who expressed his readiness to support the compromise move and actually drafted a resolution on the subject for Mrs. Besant to propose in the Madras Congress. However, he was not quite sure how the Mehta cat would jump, so he advised her to see Sir Pherozeshah and finally settle the issue with him. Apprehending that her personal approach to Mehta might spoil the case, she sent Subbarao to Bombay, but Mehta, the "Lion of Bombay", merely roared at poor Subbarao without bothering to listen to him, and disposed of him in a few minutes. He returned to Poona and reported his failure to Tilak and Gokhale. Mrs. Besant, however, was convinced of the justice of Tilak's case and assured him that she

[1] Tilak's letter to G. S. Khaparde, Nov. 22nd, 1914.

would move the compromise resolution in the Subjects Committee to amend Article 20 so as to secure for the Nationalists the freedom they demanded to elect their delegates.

At this stage, however, Gokhale went back on his word—whether he was frightened by Mehta's opposition or by the prospect of losing control of the Congress once Tilak entered it, we do not know. But he took the unusual step of writing a private letter to Mr. Bhupendranath Basu, the president-elect of the Madras Congress, which temporarily, at least, shattered all hope of a compromise. Among other allegations made in the letter, he reported Tilak as saying that on his return to the Congress he would follow a policy of boycotting the Government. Gokhale's letter, as quoted by H. P. Mody in his *Life of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta* runs as follows:

"My hope was that if we enabled the seceders by such relaxations to come in, they would, having seen the impossibility of political action on any other lines, co-operate with us in furthering the programme of the Congress by the present methods. That hope, however, has now been shattered. Mr. Tilak has told Mr. Subbarao frankly and in unequivocal terms that though he accepts the position laid down in what is known as the Congress Creed, viz. that the aim of the Congress is the attainment by India of self-government within the Empire by constitutional means, he does not believe in the present methods of the Congress, which rest on association with the Government where possible, and opposition to it where necessary. In place of these he wants to substitute the method of opposition pure and simple to the Government within constitutional limits—in other words a policy of Irish obstruction. We on our side are agitating for a larger and larger share in the government of the country—in the Legislative Councils, on Municipal and Local Boards, in public services and so forth. Mr. Tilak wants to address only one demand to the Government here and to the British public in England, viz. for the concession of self-government to India, and till that is conceded, he would urge his countrymen to have nothing to do with either the public services or Legislative Councils and local and municipal bodies. And by organizing obstruction to the Government in every possible direction within the limits of the laws of the land, he hopes to be able to bring the administration to a standstill and compel the authorities to capitulate. This is briefly his programme, and he says that he wants to work for its realization

through the Congress if he and his followers are enabled to rejoin it, or failing this, by starting a new organization to be called the National League."

Although Gokhale had written this letter confidentially it became public property as soon as it reached Basu. It immediately raised a storm of controversy. Mr. Subbarao, who was the principal mediator, and had taken the precaution of making notes of his talks with Tilak, issued a strong contradiction to the many distortions Gokhale's letter contained. Subbarao, according to his notes—which he had had corrected by Tilak and had showed to Gokhale—stated, "The attitude of the Nationalists is generally one of constitutional opposition to the Government, while that of the Moderates is that of co-operation with the Government. Though the goal of both is the same, the difference between them lies in the methods adopted by them for reaching the goal".

In a further statement published in Mrs. Besant's *New India* of February 8th, 1915, Subbarao disclosed that he found that the Bombay Moderates (Mehta and his followers) were uncompromisingly opposed to the amendment resolution proposed by Mrs. Besant because "great apprehension was felt that the Congress would be running a great risk if Mr. Tilak and his followers came in". The mischief was done, however, when President Basu referred to Gokhale's letter and its allegations that Tilak favoured a boycott of the Government. Mrs. Besant, who had long talks with Tilak, as we have seen before, could not believe this allegation and sent the following telegram to Tilak: "Moved amendment. Debate adjourned. It is said by opponents you favour boycott of Government. I say you do not. Wire which is true." Tilak immediately replied, "I have never advocated boycott of Government. Prominent Nationalists have served and are serving in municipalities and legislative councils and I have fully supported their action both privately and publicly". The next day when the Subjects Committee resumed its meeting Mrs. Besant read out Tilak's telegram, whereupon the Congress President offered his unconditional apology to Tilak for making those "ill-founded allegations". But the followers of Gokhale still managed to defeat Mrs. Besant's resolution and the amendment of Article 20 was shelved by appointing a Committee to submit a report to the Congress the following year.

When the Committee eventually made its report its principal

recommendation was substantially favourable to Mrs. Besant's amendment. It was conceded that "Public meetings convened under the auspices of any association which is of not less than two years' standing on 31st December 1915" had the right to elect delegates to the Congress. Tilak's main demand was for the freedom to elect delegates without having to look for recognition and support by Moderate associations. As this was now conceded, he and his followers decided to attend the 1916 Congress of Allahabad after being in the wilderness for nearly nine years.

21

THE RE-ENTRY INTO THE CONGRESS

The Madras Congress abundantly proved that the Moderate leaders who held the reins of power had neither learned nor forgotten anything since the Surat split. Gokhale's confidential letter to Bhupendranath Basu, the Congress president, was nothing short of a stab in the back for Tilak, and clearly showed that the old guard would fight to the last and use any means to prevent Tilak's entry into Congress. As we have seen, the initiative for a compromise was taken by Mrs. Besant who worked hard to bring the two wings together again, but her failure left Tilak in great uncertainty over the prospects of any early opportunity of rejoining the Congress. His only hope was that the Committee appointed to consider the Congress compromise would report in his favour, but as the Committee was dominated by the Moderates, this seemed unlikely. However, fully conscious of the strength and reasonableness of his case, Tilak was prepared for the time being to let things take their course. Although bitterly disappointed at the failure of the Madras session to bring about the desired results, he had no wish to enter into a controversy. He wrote in *Kesari* (January 5th, 1915) in a very restrained tone, pointing out that the objections and fears of the Moderate Party about the Nationalists were unfounded, that the Congress had become in recent years a club of the Moderate Party and that it had ceased to be a national organization. "Consequently," he said, "it has lost its prestige and influence. In no other province in India are the political divisions and animosities so acute and bitter as in Bombay. The principal reason, of course, for this state of affairs is the determination of men like Mehta, Wattcha and Gokhale to keep out the Nationalists at any cost. They are afraid of contamination by the Nationalists". Tilak now prepared to leave the matter there and turn his energies to reorganizing his own party

for political agitation in the country independent of Congress patronage and support.

But the followers of Gokhale and his newspapers forced Tilak's hand. By accusing him of underhand motives and methods they provoked a most unsavoury controversy, for Tilak was not a man to take insults lying down. In a scathing article (*Kesari* February 9th, 1915) he flayed his opponents by citing the many deliberate distortions and falsehoods of the Moderate press. The most glaring of these was their version of the telegrams which passed between Mrs. Besant and Tilak (quoted in the preceeding chapter). The *Dnyanaprakash*, conducted by Gokhale's Servants of India Society, had quietly omitted the words "of Government" from their printed version of Mrs. Besant's telegram, making it read, "It is said by opponents you favour boycott", instead of "You favour boycott of Government". The newspaper twisted Tilak's reply as well, and by omitting altogether the supporting clause about the prominent Nationalists serving in Legislative Councils, etc., it was made to read, "I have never advocated boycott of Government personally". Furthermore, in the original telegram the word "personally" is nowhere to be found.

In this article Tilak was brutally frank and bitter; he did not spare his opponents. This attack was not meant to be personal nor did Tilak cast any aspersions on Gokhale, although the latter could not escape the responsibility for writing that sinister private letter. He questioned Gokhale's political honesty in accusing him in the letter to the Congress president of motives which he had never entertained. To put a stop to this unsavoury squabble he challenged Gokhale to publish the original letter. The fact that the Moderate leader failed to take up the challenge was regarded by the people as conclusive proof that he had a guilty conscience.

Gokhale who was already confined to bed, died (February 19th, 1915) less than ten days after the publication of Tilak's article. His death was followed not long after by that of his chief, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, who died on November 5th, 1915.

Many said that Tilak's article caused Gokhale's death. This, of course, was nonsense. Tilak and Gokhale were political enemies and never spared each other when it came to public controversies, but they knew each other's worth. A comparison of their characters provides a perfect political contrast. In temperament and methods

they represented two distinct types in the political life of India. Often they clashed—such conflicts were inevitable under the circumstances—but there were also moments when they could rise above their differences. When Gokhale died, Tilak laid aside all the bitterness of the past and paid tribute to his great political opponent. In his funeral oration Tilak said, "This is a sad and solemn occasion. We have sustained an irreparable loss in the death of Mr. Gokhale. This diamond of India . . . this prince of workers is taking eternal rest on the funeral grounds. Look at him and try to emulate him. . . . Like a triumphant hero he is passing away after having made his name immortal. I had known him since his youth. He was an ordinary and simple man in the beginning, like all of us here. But he rose to great eminence by the sheer force of work and ability. Every one of you ought to try to set his example before your eyes."

With the passing of Gokhale and Mehta, the strongest opposition to Tilak vanished and many Nationalists thought that their entry into the Congress could now be achieved without further delay. But Tilak knew better; he saw in the death of the two leaders the possibility of further complications, for the surviving Moderates would fight to the last ditch and thus prolong the agony of disunity. He wanted to shorten this period and the only way to do so, he thought, was to allow the Moderates to adopt whatever line they liked, and to leave them severely alone. Meanwhile he meant to create a strong public opinion in the country which would compel the Moderates to re-admit him and his party into the Congress. With this aim in view he began consultations with his colleagues on the possibility of starting a nationalist organization of his own. The time was ripe, for since his release from prison his many thousands of followers had been urging him to reorganize their party, which had lacked strength and direction during his absence. And not only his followers, but people all over the country were expecting from Tilak a new lead, a new political programme. They could not imagine him merely waiting on events and doing nothing, for, in their eyes, he was action personified and the visible symbol of their own urges and aspirations.

Tilak thought the moment had come to revive the Bombay Provincial Conference which had been in abeyance for some time and through it to revive and revitalize his party. Fortunately the machinery for calling such a conference was still in the hands of the Nationalists. Accordingly, the Conference was held in Poona on

May 8th, 1915 under the presidency of Joseph Bapista, a staunch Nationalist and a leading member of the Bombay Bar. More than a thousand delegates from all over the Presidency turned up. This pleased Tilak immensely, for it proved that the heart of the Nationalist Party was sound in spite of the Government's repression and terrorism; it also proved that the people had retained their old faith and confidence in Tilak's leadership; and above all it proved that the masses were ready to work on the principle of self-help to attain the ideal of self-government and freedom.

The Provincial Conference was a tremendous success. It was conceded even by the Moderates that it could not have been such a success but for the inspiring personality of Tilak. They for their part held a separate Provincial Conference which proved a miserable affair, whether judged by its attendance or its enthusiasm; however, the organizers consoled themselves by boasting of the visit the Governor, Lord Willingdon, paid to their meeting.

It was at the Provincial Conference that Tilak made his first great political speech since his release—one, indeed, which shook the subcontinent of India. He gave the people the magic words "Home Rule", which were to echo over the next two years through the length and breadth of the country, in cities and villages alike.Tilak's speech is described by contemporary writers as a most skilful handling of the subject of home rule. It was bold, clear and lucid and "the impression he created in his audience was indelible and never to be forgotten. The seed of Swaraj was sown and the people felt sure of the harvest". His speech made the Conference an epoch-making event, for it was the first public occasion where home rule was put forward as the only cure for India's political ills and grievances. Home rule was a common enough term in British politics; but in India many regarded it with something like horror, owing perhaps to its close association with the events in Ireland at that time. Moderates of the old school shuddered at the word; they were equally shocked to hear the word Swaraj and could bear the mention of self-government only if that was to be a distant goal dimly visible on the horizon far beyond the possibility of practical politics.

The war in Europe was also having its impact on the minds of men. It was vaguely believed that it would be of short duration. The Austrian forces were defeated and the road to Hungary was now open for the Russian advance; Italy had joined the Allies and in the

West the battle of Ypres had for the time being broken the offensive power of Germany. But the serious set-back which Russia suffered in June 1915 completely altered the situation and made the war a protracted affair. Tilak saw new opportunities for India in the prospect of a prolonged war. He was convinced that each month the war went on must draw India more and more into the vortex of British politics and that her vast resources in man-power and raw materials must make her indispensable to the Allied victory. After the U.S.A., which England had been courting since the beginning of the war, India was probably the only country which could furnish the Allied powers with raw materials in abundance for the manufacture of munitions. Tilak therefore argued that to win the war India's help would be vital; this in turn would enhance her prestige and add strength to her demand for her proper place in the counsels of the Empire. In Tilak's view the psychological moment had arrived, and he now decided to go all out to exploit it.

Government officials frowned on Tilak's new slogan of home rule. They wanted to discourage political agitation of any kind on the ground that it would distract the people's attention from the war effort. He, on the other hand, was convinced that India's demands stood a good chance of being conceded by Britain if she made them in the consciousness of her strength and spoke with one voice. Unity in the Congress therefore now became his sole concern and his only anxiety.

The Committee appointed at Madras to examine the desirability of amending Article 20 of the Congress constitution recommended an amendment which would enable Tilak and his party to rejoin the Congress. This favourable recommendation itself gave rise to a strong opposition from some of Tilak's own party to the acceptance of the compromise, for some of his able lieutenants resented the idea that they had to depend on the recommendation of a committee of Moderates to rejoin the Congress. They were aware that their party was much stronger than their opponents, in popular support, in numbers, and in political thinking, and so they were not prepared to think of the Moderates as being on an equal footing. They urged their views on Tilak and advised him to have nothing to do with the compromise. They were unable to see why their leader, who had been so indifferent during the two previous years, had in 1916 become intensely keen to rejoin the Congress. Indeed, to many of

his friends and admirers his attitude seemed inconsistent, for they could not see that Tilak's outlook stretched beyond party quarrels and personal jealousies. He had hitched his wagon to the star of India's freedom; everything else was of secondary importance.

The Nationalist leaders and newspapers were evenly divided on the question of the Congress compromise. Tilak himself made no secret of his readiness to accept it but he assured his followers that he would not re-join without taking them with him. Mahatma Gandhi's description of him as "The Democrat of the Democrats" was fully borne out when he invited the prominent members of his party to a private meeting to thrash out the question. When votes were taken after two days' debate, to everyone's surprise the vote went against him. He again explained in greater detail his reasons for accepting the compromise but was still unable to convince the opposition and bring them round to his point of view. It was therefore agreed that the matter should rest where it was, and that the members should think over Tilak's views and settle the issue finally at Belgaum.

It was Tilak's invariable practice never to make a decision without giving his party the opportunity of discussing the issue in a democratic way. He knew his own mind, but he always listened to all the points of view which were put forward in the discussion. He also knew that if he so ordered no member would go against him but he never ordered party members to carry out any action or accept any policy with which they were not in full agreement. When somebody asked Tilak why he did not tell his obstinate colleagues what to do, he said, "My duty ends at explaining my opinion. It is not for me to impose it on others. I strongly resent domination whether it is political or intellectual. I believe in an intelligent following which does not accept anything from the leader on trust".

Such was the first reaction of many Nationalists to Tilak's advice to rejoin the Congress; but he did not give up hope. In the Bombay Provincial Congress of 1916, held at Belgaum under the presidency of his colleague, G. S. Khaparde, the whole question of rejoining the Congress was thrashed out in a full discussion and was finally settled satisfactorily when all opposition to Tilak melted away.

But the Belgaum session of the Provincial Conference was a small affair in comparison with the formal inauguration of a new political

body, the Indian Home Rule League, which was destined to grow into the most powerful political force India had so far produced.

In the midst of this intense political activity, Tilak still managed to find time to see through the press his *Gita Rahasya*, which was published in June 1915. The book was an original interpretation of the Bhagavat Gita, and was immediately acclaimed by eminent scholars as a unique contribution to the philosophical thought of the world. His two previous works, the *Orion* and the *Arctic Home in the Vedas*, had marked him out as a brilliant research scholar, of unusual originality and independent approach; the *Gita Rahasya* established his reputation as a great thinker and philosopher. It would be true to say that the *Rahasya* invested Tilak with high spiritual authority, the extent and depth of which it is difficult to exaggerate.

22

THE HOME RULE MOVEMENT

Home Rule is my birth right and I will have it.
LOKAMANYA TILAK

The formation of the Indian Home Rule League was the crowning achievement of Tilak's political career. He had worked for thirty-five years to give concrete shape to the people's political aspirations, largely aroused and sustained by his own exertions and sufferings, and his labours bore fruit at last at Belgaum. The country could now speak out and demand its birthright without fear. The people had become conscious of their rights; their aspirations had assumed a definite shape, and they realized that a foreign bureaucracy cannot be mended but must be ended. Now the time had surely come, Tilak said, to demand control of the country's affairs. But if the demand for Swaraj was to be effective, it must be made through a powerful and organized body. The Home Rule League was to be that body.

With Tilak no idea, however grand and alluring, was of use until it was reduced to a workable proposition. Home Rule for India was a splendid concept, but it was no more than an idea held by a few advanced politicians, expressed—when it was expressed—almost apologetically, until Tilak gave it shape and form and created in the All-India Home Rule League the machinery to express it adequately. Once the League was formed, Tilak moved with extraordinary force. His whole being was devoted to the propagation of the idea of Home Rule; it became his life and his passion. His friend Gangadharrao Deshpande, who was Tilak's right-hand man and his host at Belgaum, said, "The idea of the Home Rule League consumed the Lokamanya's every wakeful moment. And the public lecture which he gave in our town, expounding what Home Rule really meant,

laid the pattern of an agitation which was to embrace the whole country within a matter of a few months after the inauguration of the League." It was characteristic of Tilak that he refused to be the League's president and gave that position to Joseph Baptista. His two other right-hand men, N. C. Kelkar and D. V. Gokhale, were appointed secretaries and the work of enrolling members began in earnest. At the same time he appointed a committee of experts to prepare a draft bill which he intended to introduce in Parliament through the Labour Party; the idea of Home Rule, he insisted, must be carried to its logical conclusion—practical results, and the Parliamentary Bill would be such a result.

The first speech on Home Rule delivered at Belgaum on May 1st, 1916, is a memorable utterance. It is one of the constants in politics, for it stated the fundamental rights of the Indian people, made out a reasoned case for the immediate grant of self-government and declared the people's determination to get it, come what may. It was nothing less than a declaration of cold war against British rule and a challenge to the Indian people. His audience was a mixed one: highly educated doctors and lawyers, rich landlords and merchant princes as well as utterly illiterate workers and peasants, landless and jobless. But Tilak's exposition of his theme of Swaraj was so lucid and full of homely illustrations that his message went home and people enrolled eagerly. As the Belgaum address became part of his trilogy of speeches on this theme—the other two were delivered at Ahamednagar—and later led to his third trial for sedition, it has achieved historic importance. The extracts we quote will help the reader to appreciate Tilak's individual style, at once simple and forceful.

He began his speech by asking the people not to confuse the institution of kingship with the bureaucratic administration of India. "They are two separate things," he said, "to us Indians the Emperor is merely a name, an abstract conception. And though the King can be visualized in his physical form you must remember that it is not the King who conducts the administration in person. The question of Swaraj has nothing to do with the King or the idea of a King, who is like our Brahma, invisible and unfathomable without attributes of good and evil . . . just as Brahma is different from Maya. The latter assumes diverse shapes and forms which change according to occasion and circumstance—change is the very essence of Maya. The

institution of kingship, which is the essence of government, is like the absolute Brahma, bound to remain immutable and unchanged; but the government which assumes the visible form is liable to change. The Swaraj I propose to talk to you about this evening refers to this visible government; what changes must be brought about in it, so as to promote the well-being of the people. . . . The question of Swaraj really means, in whose hands should be vested the control of our affairs? I have said we do not wish to change the immutable government or the King, but what we demand is that the management of our affairs should not be, as now, in the hands of the visible government—the bureaucracy—but should be transferred to our hands. In one word, the agitation for Swaraj is for the transfer of this control to the people of the land. Take the instance of England, whence come the rulers of India. There the permanent authority is vested in the King but his powers are so circumscribed that he remains for the most part uninformed of the affairs of the Kingdom until his Ministers go to him and tell him what is going on. This limitation of his powers is the basis, the fundamental principle, recognized by the English concept that the King can do no wrong. In England the Minister does everything on his own responsibility and the practical absence of prosecutions for sedition in England is accounted for mainly by the recognition of this principle. But the wonder is that the same people who come over here to govern us institute proceedings for sedition in this country. Those that actually govern the country are different from the King. The King remains one and the same but the Ministry changes every five years. Does anyone object to this change of Ministry in England? Does anyone call it an act of sedition? The British people are privileged to do these things; they are privileged to fight for such a change. What has the King to do with these quarrels? He is like the Brahma, without attributes. He is not in the least affected by these changes. Exactly similar is the present agitation for Swaraj in India.

"Who rules over India? Certainly not the King. The administration is carried on through the servants of the King, such as the Secretary of State, the Viceroy, the Governor, the Collector, the Patel, and lastly the constable. Is it then seditious to say that a certain constable should be removed and that he should be replaced by another? Is it sedition to say that we do not want a particular governor or secretary of state and that other men should be appointed

in their place? Where is then any room for sedition if you say that we do not want the present system of government? It is not pertinent to our purpose to discuss whether the present rule of the British Government is good or bad. But one thing is certain, that for every small thing we have to petition to the authorities whether we wish to sink a well or kill a tiger in the jungle. Thus we are reduced to a sort of impotence. We are sick and tired of this state of affairs. We want a better arrangement and this better arrangement we call Swaraj or Home Rule.

"We are told that the present arrangements are good and the administrators are appointed and recruited in England in accordance with certain rules and regulations. These rules might be good or might not be. They might be very good, very well conceived, very systematic, for the sake of argument I admit all that. But however good the arrangement may be, it is made by others, not by the people themselves and hence they cannot be expected to be satisfied with it because they themselves wish to have this power in their own hands. This is the fundamental principle of Swaraj. I do not say that if you acquire the right of appointing or electing your own governor, the person so elected will make a better governor than the present one. Perhaps he may not be as efficient as the one appointed by Britain. I dare say he may be worse. But what makes the whole difference is this, that the man whom we elect has to carry out what we desire and the one who is not elected by us acts according to his own will to which we must acquiesce whether we like it or not.

"To entrust to the people the responsibility of administering their own affairs is the best principle in politics. There is no question about this. The same principle prevails in the country of those that are governing here in this land of ours. When these people go back to their country they have to uphold this principle.

"I again say that the demand for Swaraj involves no sedition. It has nothing to do with the invisible sovereign government. The essence of Swaraj is that we should manage our domestic affairs according to our wishes . . . and it is with this purpose in view that I have chosen this subject for today's discourse. The subject is being discussed in other quarters as well. The Home Rule League which we have formed for this purpose is such that I myself and some of my colleagues shall have to bring this subject again and again before the people, keep this object always before your mind, discuss it often and

often, ponder over it carefully, try to perceive its utility thoroughly, weigh carefully how much of loyalty and how much of disloyalty it contains. This is what I have to impress upon your minds at this lecture. Though I wanted to tell you a great deal about this subject, I could only briefly outline to you the substance of my ideas. If this subject receives your anxious consideration, if it is made the subject of discussion not only in Maharashtra, but all over India, be sure that our endeavours must succeed. . . . Every action must bear fruit. The effect may not happen as early as we could wish, perhaps it may not take place before I pass away, perhaps I myself shall not be benefited by it. But action cannot fail to bring on its effects. According to the law of 'Karma' every action must bring about its particular result, and that again must give rise to quite another consequence. It will take time; some delay is inevitable before the desired fruit is obtained. But when we pray to God for final emancipation, do we insist that it must be secured before we close our eyes or do we desire that it should be achieved through the agency of a particular individual? We have just now passed a resolution that there should be no separate parties of the Moderates and Nationalists. This means that it is immaterial to us whether Swaraj is granted to either of these. We don't object if you grant this privilege even to your constables.

"We want our rights. We want a particular kind of rule that will secure our happiness. I believe that we shall get it. We have to exert ourselves in the right direction and set ourselves to the task in the full faith that the work is our own. I am perfectly sure that by the grace of God, even if you do not get the fruit of your labour in your lifetime, the next generation will not fail to reap the benefits."

After Belgaum Tilak carried out a whirlwind tour of Ahamednagar, Nasik, and many other places, preaching his new gospel; everywhere he went, thousands came to greet and listen to him. Tilak had the unique knack of synthesizing the highest philosophic concept with the mundane ideas of every-day politics. At Nasik he said, "The physical body grows old, it becomes too frail to be supported and then it perishes. But the inner spirit—the Atma—that carried the outer covering of physical body is always free and unfettered by the shackles of earthly life. It is always free, and freedom never grows old. The body dies but the Atma is immune from death; similarly the spirit of liberty that animates our activities

and guides our movements can never grow old. The spirit of liberty is ever fresh and young and those that have drawn inspiration from it and have begun to work for its achievement through difficulties of every sort are bound to reap the fruit of their labours. Those that earnestly strive for liberty must become free. . . . If you admit the truth of this proposition you must admit that liberty is the birthright of every man. The privilege of being free does not need to be granted by somebody else. Every man who is born comes into this world with this elementary right. This innermost craving of the heart to be free, this intense desire to get one's liberty, is the essence of human nature. And as long as the spirit of freedom rules my heart I shall refuse to admit that I have grown old! The Bhagawat Gita tells you that this imperishable Atma cannot be destroyed by weapons nor can it be burned by fire. What is called Atma (soul) in religious philosophy is known as liberty in the science of politics. Atma exists everywhere; it does not need to be reborn. Similarly the love of liberty exists in every heart and I am only awakening you to the consciousness of its existence. Some people forget that they have this Atma or love of liberty—the reason being their ignorance."

Tilak thus claimed India's right to independence not only for the material well being of the people but also for their spiritual and moral well being. The liberty of the spirit was the basis of his home-rule agitation and in a country like India whose spiritual reserves are inexhaustible and unfathomable his message of political freedom gained an added force.

At this time Tilak found in Mrs. Besant a wonderful and enthusiastic political worker. She was so fired by Tilak's idealism that she founded her own Home Rule League in Madras in September 1916. A year or two previously she had joined the Indian National Congress and started two newspapers to carry on political propaganda among the masses—*The Common Weal*, a weekly, and *New India*, a daily. She expressed her political goal in these words: "In political reform we aim at the building up of complete self-government from village councils . . . to a national parliament equal in its powers to the legislative bodies of the self-governing colonies." She believed in intensive propaganda, and organized agitation through her Theosophical Lodges all over the country. The two Leagues—the Poona and Madras Home Rule Leagues—worked together and pushed forward vigorously the propaganda for home rule in India.

When Mrs. Besant visited Poona she delivered a lecture under Tilak's presidency and advised the people to take full advantage of Mr. Bonar Law's exhortation to the Colonies to "strike while the iron is hot". Agreeing with the speaker, Tilak said, "The time has come when we must concentrate on the single demand for home rule. The days of asking for piece-meal reforms are gone."

This campaign and the continuous travelling it entailed began to tell on Tilak's health; to add to this, the summer heat made it impossible for him to carry on his work from Poona. He therefore went to his mountain resort, Sinhgarh, where he hoped to find rest and quiet.

In July 1916 his followers decided to celebrate Tilak's sixty-first birthday, and without his knowledge great preparations were set afoot. Apart from the religious ceremony, which consisted of offerings to a sacrificial fire, and a free meal to thousands of poor and destitute people, the Nationalist Party organized a public meeting attended by ten thousand men and women, where addresses were presented to Tilak together with a purse of Rs.100,000. This was a unique occasion as in modern Indian political history no leader had received from his followers such a magnificent gift in recognition of his services to the country.

Tilak's speech in reply was characteristic. It was inspired by patriotism, courage and idealism. He said, "You have overwhelmed me by your kindness; whatever success I have achieved in the past was through your co-operation—that itself was a great debt. And now, by presenting me with this princely purse you have almost bought me for the rest of my life. I do not want any money for myself; I accept the gift with some hesitation and reluctance, but I take it that you have entrusted this money to me in good faith and I assure you that I will contribute my little mite to it and the whole will be devoted to the cause of Home Rule. The national work which faces us today is so great, extensive and urgent, that you and I must work together with all the courage and enthusiasm we can muster. In this task you must show greater courage than I have been able to show. It is a task which cannot be put off. Our motherland calls every one of us to be up and doing and I hope that her sons will not fail her. Here there is no room for rivalry, jealousy or fear."

Ironically enough, on the same day the Government, which had seen its efforts to reduce Tilak to a nonentity fail and his prestige and

popularity increase by leaps and bounds since his release, presented him with its own birthday gift—a demand for a surety for "good behaviour", amounting to Rs.40.000. Tilak was required to show cause before the Poona magistrate why he should not be asked to furnish the surety. The magistrate who served the Order acted also as judge and confirmed his own Order! Tilak appealed against his ruling and the case was taken to the High Court of Bombay.

The speeches the Government had taken objection to were those delivered in Belgaum and Ahamednagar. The gravamen of the Government's charge was that Tilak had incited the people to be disloyal to the Government established by law. But Tilak's counsel, Mr. Jinnah and Mr. Erulaker, were able to show that Tilak had made a distinction between the Government established by law, which is a permanent institution, and the administration, which was subject to change. As the personnel of the administration changed from time to time, the nature of their work also changed. This was a very important distinction and the High Court Judges, Mr. Batchelor and Mr. Shah, accepted it and declared the speeches did not contain sedition.

The judgment which Tilak secured in this security trial was of paramount importance, not only to him but also to the Home Rule movement. It established the principle that the seditious character of any speech ought to be assessed not by quotations taken at random, but by passages taken in relation to their context and by the general effect of the whole. The judgment also quashed the definition of sedition which had hounded Tilak's work since 1897—his first sedition trial—when Mr. Justice Strachey had defined sedition as "absence of affection". In the 1916 trial the Judges of the High Court by setting aside this definition made the path of Home Rule agitation smoother and less perilous and gave it the character of a legitimate agitation.

After this setback the bureaucracy decided no longer to rely on the decision of the King's Courts, but to take refuge behind administrative orders to gag Tilak and stop his agitation. Following closely on his acquittal, therefore, came orders under the Defence of India Act, prohibiting him from entering the Punjab and the Delhi provinces. The Government made an exception to this, however, when Tilak had to go to Delhi to interview Mr. Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State, when he visited the country in 1917.

About the same time, May 26th, 1916, a surety of Rs.2,000 was demanded from Mrs. Besant's *New India*. This was forfeited on August 28th. A new surety of Rs.10,000 was demanded and immediately paid. Mrs. Besant also appealed to the Madras High Court, and later to the Privy Council, against the confiscation order, but without success.

The efforts of the Government to restrict the political activities of Tilak and Mrs. Besant had exactly the opposite effect to what they intended, for in 1917 both these leaders threw themselves heart and soul into the work of national propaganda and the agitation for Home Rule reached an unprecedented level. The Government felt it necessary to adopt a policy of active discouragement and repression. A circular was issued prohibiting pupils of schools and colleges from attending Home Rule meetings. The provincial governors were instructed to deliver speeches to counter the Home Rule propaganda and issue stern warnings to the leaders of the movement. The Government of Madras went further and interned Mrs. Besant and her two associates, Dr. Wadia and Dr. George Arundale. This was taken as a challenge, and protest meetings were held all over India. Many people who had till then refrained from joining the agitation enlisted themselves as members of the Home Rule Leagues. Under the inspiration of Tilak the All-India Congress Committee made a strong and dignified representation to the Viceroy and the Secretary of State, condemning the repressive and reactionary policy adopted by the Government of India and asking for the immediate grant of a substantial measure of Swaraj. It further asked for a Royal Proclamation announcing the acceptance of Indian political demands and the release of interned leaders, such as Mrs. Besant and her two associates, and the Ali brothers, and warned that unless the Government revised its policy at the earliest opportunity, discontent and unrest in India would continue to grow.

23

LUCKNOW: HINDU-MUSLIM ENTENTE

Divide and rule, a capital motto! Unite and lead, a better one.

SCHILLER

The year 1916 was the most eventful in Tilak's career. The early part of the year saw the foundation of the Home Rule League, its phenomenal success, the presentation of the public purse on Tilak's sixty-first birthday, and his legal victory in the last sedition trial. Now in the second half of the year, we come to the session of the Lucknow Congress, which marks the zenith not only of Tilak's life, but also, perhaps, of the history of the Congress, an organization which only twelve months before, at Madras, was at its lowest ebb with an attendance of barely a few hundred delegates.

Tilak, who had previously borne a reputation for intransigence in politics, now appears in the role of a constructive and conciliatory statesman. The days of fiery speeches and denunciations are over; a new phase of compromise and responsive co-operation begins. He is seen at his best at the Lucknow Congress which marks a definite stage in the political evolution of India.

From the Surat split until the Lucknow session the Indian National Congress was completely controlled by the Moderates, who, true to their reformist attitude, limited its activities to meeting once a year and passing resolutions on such subjects as: Improvements in the Council Regulations; the creation of executive councils in the United Provinces and the Punjab; the prevention of the extension of communal representation to local bodies; the abolition of the system of indentured labour and the removal of intolerable restrictions and humiliating conditions imposed on Indians in South Africa.[1]

[1] *Indian Constitutional and National Developments*, by G. N. Singh.

The net result of the Congress action up to the end of 1916 may be summed up as virtually nil. The Congress was unable to secure any material improvement in the condition of Indians; the Council Regulations remained unchanged; the United Provinces and the Punjab were still without Executive Councils; the principle of communal representation had been extended to municipal bodies—at least in one province; the Secretary of State for India's Council continued to function as before; the Press Act was still on the Statute Book and continued to strangle public opinion in the country by inflicting heavy penalties on the Nationalist section of the Press; the Arms Act remained unaltered. In one word, the Congress resolutions had proved utterly ineffectual. The only exception to this otherwise dismal record was the acceptance by the Government of the demand for the abolition of the system whereby, for over seventy-five years, indentured labour had been exported to the Crown Colonies; on the other hand, however, the Government of India showed little interest in the humiliating treatment meted out to Indian Nationals in South Africa. Such was the depressing balance sheet of Congress achievements up till 1916, when once again it met at Lucknow under the presidency of the Moderate leader Amvika Charan Mazumdar.

But all this changed after the Lucknow session. The Congress ceased to be a merely deliberate body and became an active agitational organization and devoted its entire time to making the people conscious of their political rights and responsibilities.

Earlier in the year the Government of India was preparing a dispatch to the Secretary of State in which a number of reforms were suggested. This struck Tilak as a good opportunity to put the public view-point before the Secretary of State through the medium of the non-official members of the Central Legislative Assembly. At his urging Mr. Jinnah and other members prepared a memorandum demanding council reform, which was signed by all nineteen non-official members of the Legislative Assembly. This was the first united demand for Swaraj, the first occasion when Muslims and Hindus, Moderates and Extremists, Parsees and others spoke together with one voice to demand vital reforms.

Tilak took care to see that all the members spoke with one voice. His success prepared the ground for the triumphal session of the Congress at Lucknow, for Mr. Jinnah was, so to

say, already committed to sign the Congress League scheme, at Lucknow.

Tilak travelled to Lucknow with more than 300 delegates in a special train—the "Home Rule Special"—arranged by two of his followers, Dr. D. D. Sathe and Dr. Velkar. He left Bombay on December 26th and newspaper correspondents have given a vivid description of how he was honoured, garlanded and wildly cheered all along the route. Previously he was respected for his learning, worshipped for his saintly character, and admired for his courage; now in 1916 he had become the apostle of national liberation and thousands of people, young and old, wanted to catch a glimpse of him. They waited for the special train in the cold, and in pouring rain. His long years of suffering for the country had raised his reputation all over India to the point where he was the people's guide and philosopher.

When the special train reached Lucknow it was met by the city leaders and by thousands of admiring men and women. Their enthusiasm knew no bounds; they besieged Tilak's car, showering lilies and roses on him and offering countless bouquets and garlands. Carried away by their enthusiasm, the people purposely punctured the tyres of his car and bore him off to a carriage which they drew through the streets of the city, shouting his slogan—"Swaraj is my Birthright and I Shall Have It." It took a full three hours for the procession to reach Chedilal Dharm Shala—where Tilak was staying during the Lucknow session—a fine airy building with a large quadrangle which became, as it were, a temple for the Nationalists and the Lucknow people alike.

On December 28th the Congress opened and the ovation Tilak received was, according to a contemporary account, beyond description. His appearance on the Congress platform had a tremendous effect—it changed the whole atmosphere. The long-felt sense of frustration gave place to a feeling of hope and buoyancy.

Tilak spoke on the main resolution on self-government and in acknowledgment of the tremendous reception which he received on rising to address the meeting he said: "I am overwhelmed by the warmth of your reception and I feel deeply grateful to you for it. However, allow me to say that your reception is really more for the principles I have been fighting for all these years than for me personally. The resolution which I wish to

support embodies all those principles, it is the resolution on self-government."

Explaining the resolution, he went on, "It may not be Swaraj in the widest sense of the word but it is far better than Swadeshi and boycott. It is in fact a synthesis of all the Congress resolutions passed during the past thirty years—a synthesis that will help us all to proceed to work in a definite and responsible manner. We cannot now afford to spend our energy on all thirty resolutions—public service resolutions, Arms Act and sundry others. All that is included in this one resolution on self-government, and I would ask every one of you to try to carry out this resolution with all your effort, might and enthusiasm."

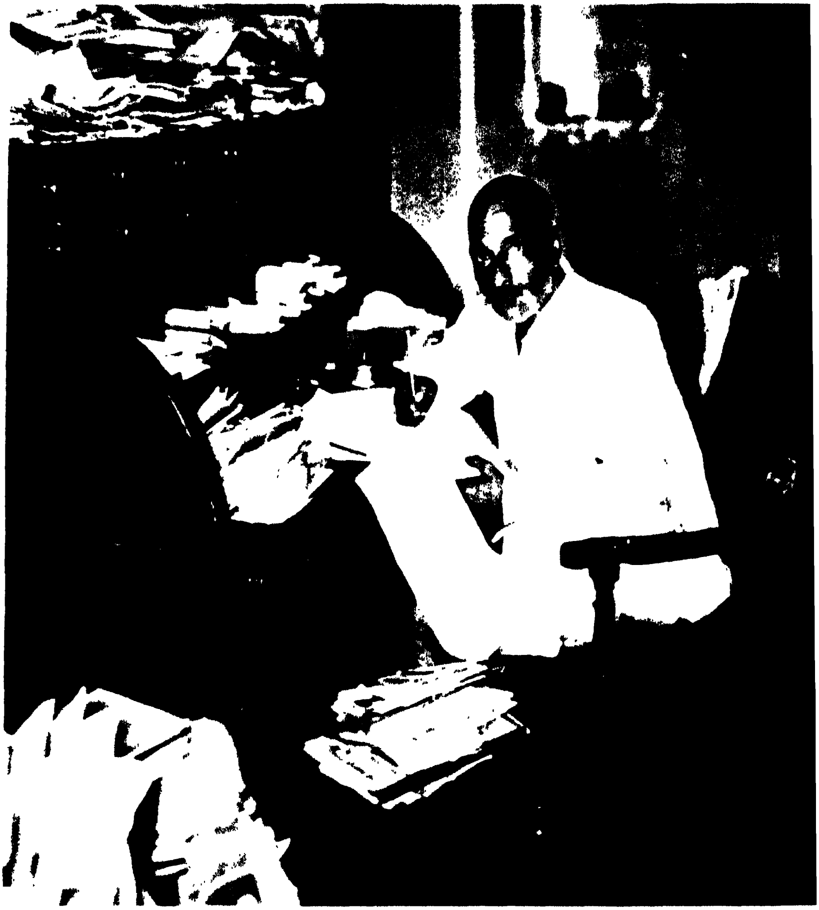
On the question of Moslem representation in the Central and Provincial Councils he was more than generous. He declared, "It has been said by some that we Hindus have yielded too much to our Mohammedan brothers. I am sure I express the feelings of the Hindu community all over India when I say that we could not have yielded too much. I would not care if the rights of self-government are granted to the Mohammedan community only. I would not care if they are granted to the Rajputs. I would not care if they are granted to the lower and the lowest classes of the Hindu population, provided the British Government considers them more fit than the educated classes of India for exercising those rights. I would not care if those rights are granted to any section of the Indian community. The fight then will be between them and the other sections of the community and not, as at present, a triangular fight. When we have to fight against a third party, it is a very important thing that we stand on this platform united: united in race, united in religion, united as regards all different shades of political creed. That is the most important event of the day."

It is no secret that but for Tilak's presence, his towering personality and the great prestige he commanded, the Congress would never have accepted the communal part of the resolution.

In the first place, all were agreed that the separate representation of Mohammedans was a dangerous principle. Then again, even if this principle were conceded, it would be a ticklish question to decide what proportion of the total of representatives should be Mohammedans. The United Provinces were adamant in refusing separate representation to the Muslims, but after a heated debate a

separate electorate was accepted, though only as a special measure and under special circumstances. But nobody was prepared to accept the Mohammedan demand for half the total representation. Finally Tilak prevailed upon Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Jinnah, the leaders of the opposing groups, to come to an understanding rather than wreck the scheme on the question of details. He argued that it would be disgraceful for educated Indians not to be able to arrive at a settlement at a time when it was admitted by all that the demand for self-government should be made with one voice. His appeal did not fall on deaf ears, and the Hindu and Muslim leaders agreed to submit to his wisdom and judgment.

It is rightly claimed by Tilak's followers and admirers that the Hindu-Muslim unity which he achieved at Lucknow was the crowning event of his career. It is true that he displeased a few Hindu leaders, but certainly he captured the hearts of the Mohammedans, and this became evident when on December 31st he attended the session of the Muslim League, where he was accorded the warmest reception and the grandest ovation. The great Muslim leader, Dr. Ansari, who became Mahatma Gandhi's right-hand man in later years and was present at the Lucknow Congress, writes: "During the course of conversations between the Congress leaders, chief amongst whom were Amvika Charan Mazumdar, the Congress President, Surendranath Bannerjee, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Mrs. Annie Besant and Lokamanya Tilak, and the leaders of the Muslim League, consisting of Mahomed Ali Jinnah, President of the League, Mazarul Haq and the Rajah of Mahmudabad, Tilak's part was always notable for liberality and magnanimity towards the Muslims. It may be asserted without any doubt that his generous gesture was a great factor in winning over the Mussulmans and in inducing them to accept the proposals which form the Lucknow Pact. The introductory portion of his speech, when proposing the resolution embodying the pact in the open session of the Congress—"It has been said by some that we Hindus have yielded too much to our Mohammedan brothers. I am sure I express the feelings of the Hindu community all over India when I say that we could not have yielded too much"—breathed the only spirit in which a majority can win the complete confidence of a minority. His vision was not of Hindu domination, as some people have wrongly asserted, but of a united India marching forward to attain its freedom."



At his desk in his office in Poona

Though Tilak appeared to yield too much to the Mohammedans, he had in fact won the case for the Hindus. The Mohammedans were in a numerical majority in Bengal and the Punjab and demanded a majority of the seats for those provinces, which would have given them a statutory majority in the councils. Tilak rightly urged—and carried his point—that their proportion of seats should be based not on population but on the number of voters. In accordance with this principle Bengal Muslims were alloted only forty per cent and Punjab Muslims fifty per cent of the seats in the general electorate. But there was to be no such allotment in the special constituencies (the universities, Chambers of Commerce, and some other special electorates).

One further feature of the electoral arrangements was altered by Tilak's settlement to the advantage of the Hindus. By the Morley-Minto reforms the Muslims had two doors open to them for election. Not only were they allotted separate constituencies in which no non-Mohammedan could oppose them, but they were also free to contest any of the other seats. This was plainly unfair to the Hindus, and so under the Lucknow Pact the Mohammedans agreed not to contest these other seats. Thus, though apparently conceding too much, Tilak took care to see that nowhere would the Mohammedans gain a statutory majority.

The Lucknow Congress finally buried the hatchet between Hindus and Muslims and between the Moderates and the Nationalists and, above all, gave birth to a demand for Swaraj, Home Rule, on a truly national scale. It is for this reason that the Lucknow session of the Congress has been regarded as a turning point in India's political evolution. Tilak himself regarded the Congress achievements at Lucknow as something in the nature of a miracle. Writing on the subject, his newspaper *Kesari* says, "Friday 29th December, 1916 is a day in Indo-British relations worthy to be written with golden letters. On that day, on the banks of the sacred river Gomati the standard of Indian Swaraj was unfurled. The resolution of Swaraj passed on that day was an act of historic importance; the aspirations of India were crowned on that day, so to speak, and all her subjects came there to pay their homage to Mother India. Caste distinctions, differences of opinion, personal jealousies and everything that was gross and went to destroy the unity of the nation was finally drowned in the waters of the Gomati, and India assumed a new and sacred

form. It is true that the country took thirty or forty years to give concrete shape to its aspirations and to give adequate expression to them but on Friday the whole nation with one voice declared to the entire world what it wants and what it stands for. It is impossible for India ever to forget that resolution and her every effort in future will be to attain that declaration.

"The Government used to pity the advocates of Swaraj, pointing to the differences in the political camps of India, but now time has taken revenge on them and it will be the Government who will be pitied from now on. From the inception of the Congress the Muslims were successfully divided from the Hindus; in the last ten years the bureaucracy had succeeded in dividing even the Hindus by rallying the Moderates, but now everything is changed. In less than four years, not only the Moderates and the Extremists have come together but even the Hindus and Muslims have forgotten their differences. What is the magic wand that brought about this metamorphosis? Surely it is the growing national consciousness, whose glow melted and destroyed all those anti-national and anti-social differences. We have no hesitation in issuing a warning to the bureaucracy that its days are numbered now that the united voice of India has given it the final notice to quit."

It is interesting to note what the Government thought about the Lucknow Congress. In its yearly publication *India* for 1917–18 it described the Congress in these words: "When the Congress met it was plain that the Left Wing of the Nationalist party, commonly called the Extremists, as represented by the followers of Mrs. Besant and Mr. Tilak, was in a distinct majority." This was a tacit admission that henceforward the Government would be obliged to take note of the Congress demand and that Nationalist leaders like Tilak would have to be listened to, not ignored as they had been till then.

It is true that the war did not originate the demand for home rule but it certainly did give it a new meaning and a new urgency; and what is perhaps more important in the context of world events at the time, it gave it an air of reality which it had never possessed before. Indians had grown accustomed to foreign rule; in fact, many leaders like Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, Pandit Madan Mohan Malivya, Sir Surendranath Bannerjee and Mudholkar, were much more conscious of the benefits of English rule than of its harmful effects. It was the war that brought home to them the humiliations of foreign conquest

and the real meaning and value of Swaraj. What would happen if Germany conquered England was a question often asked in India. And the picture which British statesmen usually painted in reply was so terrible that no sacrifice was considered too great to prevent such a calamity. Furthermore, British statesmen, in order to arouse sympathy and support for the Allied cause, labelled the war as "a war to make the world safe for democracy". They gave an assurance that every nation, large or small, was henceforth to have the right of self-determination; and no nation, however small or weak it might be, was to be forced to live under a form of government of which it did not approve.

Tilak took these declarations at their face value and used them to press forward the cause of Indian freedom. Under the leadership of Mrs. Besant in the Madras Presidency and Tilak in the Bombay Presidency intensive propaganda for home rule was carried on with great enthusiasm and consummate skill. Both these leaders were anxious to give all possible help in the prosecution of the war but they believed that the war offered India a heaven-sent opportunity to win freedom, and they must on no account allow it to be lost. Whenever Tilak or his followers were invited to war conferences they raised the issue of Swaraj and equality of status and linked it with the question of war aid. They boldly declared that it was not right to ask the people to fight if they were to be treated as mere hewers of wood and drawers of water. Indians must be given an equal position with the British in the Army, Defence Force and Reserve Forces. They must be allowed to hold the King's commissions and occupy high service and civilian appointments; most important of all, they must receive a clear assurance that at the end of the war they would return to a free country.

The year 1917 began with unparalleled political activity all over the country. Although frail and weak in body, Tilak carried his message of Swaraj from one end of the country to the other, addressing mammoth meetings in Cawnpore, Calcutta, Amraoti, Nagpur, Yavatamal, Karanja and many other places. As the tempo of the campaign rose, he widened the scope of India's political demands. At Cawnpore, for instance, he said, "We will remain in the Empire only as equals. We will not live in the Empire merely as servants and load-carriers. India has now realized her true strength and character just as the proverbial tiger cub, raised in a flock of sheep,

realized his true nature on seeing his reflection in the water. The Indian people are now fully awakened to their true status and destiny. If the Japanese, who are Asians like the Indians, can enjoy the liberties and responsibilities of Swaraj, why cannot we?"

In May 1917, Tilak went to Nasik to attend the first annual meeting of the Home Rule League. The report which the secretaries presented is an eloquent testimony to his drive and powers of organization. In twelve months the League had registered 14,218 members and collected Rs.9,000 from subscriptions and Rs.6,000 from donations. The head office had sent out 5,000 letters and had received as many. The League had published six Marathi and two English books explaining the demand for Swaraj. Seventy-five thousand copies of Tilak's speeches were issued and they were also published in Gujarathi and Kanarese.

In his address to the Nasik meeting Tilak said, "The resolution on Swaraj was passed at Lucknow because a large number of the members of the Home Rule League attended the session and supported the resolution. In the Congress organization there is still some weakness in that it has not yet evolved a functional machinery to carry out the work from day to day, and from year to year. However, so long as it looks upon the Home Rule League work with approval and appreciation we should regard our work as the Congress work. We must make every effort to enrol 50,000 members and collect Rs.50,000 in the coming year. We have to do a great deal of work in England, for which plenty of funds will be required. We must maintain permanently one or two able men in England to educate the English people, which will cost a lot of money, but we must not grudge the expense. Home Rule League workers must from now onward devote themselves to propagating the idea of Swaraj fearlessly and ceaselessly."

The Home Rule League campaigns in Bombay and Madras alarmed the Governments of the two presidencies which therefore tried to suppress the new movement indirectly by placing restrictions on the liberties of its two leaders—Tilak and Mrs. Besant. We have already seen how proceedings were started against Tilak for delivering certain speeches at Home Rule League meetings and how the High Court of Bombay declared the movement legitimate and lawful. A circular was issued forbidding pupils of schools and colleges to attend Home Rule meetings. The provincial governors

delivered speeches denouncing the propaganda for Home Rule and warning the leaders of the movement. The Government of Madras went further and issued internment orders against Mrs. Besant and her two associates, Wadia and Arundale. They also helped the non-Brahmins to start an anti-Home Rule campaign, thus encouraging them to fan the flames of communalism in the presidency of Madras. The internment of Mrs. Besant created a storm of opposition and indignation from one end of the country to the other. Protest meetings were held all over India and prominent men like Surendranath Bannerjee and Mohammed Ali Jinnah, who had refrained from joining till then, enlisted in a body as members of the Home Rule Leagues and accepted responsible offices.

At the July meeting of the all-India Congress committee Tilak raised the question of starting passive resistance as a reply to the Government's repression, but he did not press its immediate acceptance as some of the Moderate leaders wanted the matter referred to the provincial Congress committees for opinion. However, he strongly pressed upon the Committee his proposal to elect Mrs. Besant as President of the next Congress session, irrespective of whether she was released or not, as a mark of their appreciation of her great services to the Indian cause. Although many of the Moderates did not like the proposal, the various Provincial Congress committees took up Tilak's suggestion and recommended Mrs. Besant for the Presidency of the 1917 Congress. The acceptance of Tilak's proposal marked the triumph of his party over the Moderates who still spoke the language of Surat—"Do not openly flout the Government; for then the Government will quickly throttle our movement." Mrs. Besant's election meant that India had once and for all given up the policy of going cap in hand to ask for favours. She now realized the respect she owed herself and had made up her mind to fight for her independence. This was indeed a bold challenge. It dared the Government to do its worst and to measure its powers of repression against the determination of the Indian people to win their freedom. The political situation in India thus became so grave that it arrested the attention of the British Government.

24

MONTAGU'S ANNOUNCEMENT AND TILAK

Mr. Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, was faced with a difficult situation. England was engaged in war against Germany and so was unable to give much attention to India. Yet the officials in India had managed Indian affairs so badly and had so exasperated the people that matters there were going from bad to worse. Meanwhile the rest of the civilized world was looking on and forming its own judgment on England. Montagu's problem was this: Could England promise some measure of self-government to India although she was herself fighting a life-and-death struggle? And if she did not, would she not be accused of hypocrisy?

The position was not made easier by the publication, a few weeks before Mr. Montagu went to the India Office, of the report of the Mesopotamian Commission. Contrary to all expectations, the Commission had condemned the conduct of the Mesopotamia campaign as carried on by the Government of Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy, and by Mr. Chamberlain, then Secretary of State for India. The report caused a great sensation both in India and England and materially influenced the demand for political reforms in India. Tilak took full advantage of the "mess of Mesopotamia" and in *Kesari* he was able to point out how inefficient the Indian Government was. The old plea of the efficiency of the administration which was always trotted out to oppose demands for political reforms could no longer hold water. At this moment Tilak's criticisms found support in the least expected quarter. Almost all he said about the British administration both in Delhi and in London was echoed by Mr. Montagu. In the speech he made in the House of Commons on July 12th, 1917, in the debate on the Mesopotamian Commission, he made a most damaging indictment of the whole system of government

in India. It was, he said, "too wooden, too iron, too inelastic, too antediluvian to be of any use for the modern purposes we have in view". He went further and urged a number of reforms: greater independence of action for the Viceroy, the partial transfer of control to the Legislatures in India, the removal of the burden of the cost of the India Office from the Indian taxpayers, greater responsibility for the Secretary of State through the reduction of the India Council's powers and the reform of the machinery of the India Office. The India Office drew from him this scathing condemnation: "I tell this House that the statutory organization of the India Office produces an apotheosis of circumlocution and red tape beyond the dreams of any ordinary citizen." Mr. Montagu supported the Indians in their demand for an immediate declaration of British policy on India and for substantial changes in India's system of government. In conclusion he said, "If you want to use loyalty (of the Indian people) you must give them that higher opportunity of controlling their own destinies, not merely by councils which cannot act, but by control, by growing control of the executive itself". And he ended by telling the House very frankly: "Unless you are prepared to remodel in the light of modern experience this century-old and cumbrous machine, then I believe, I verily believe, that you will lose your right to control the destinies of the Indian Empire."

Tilak was delighted with this speech and used it effectively in his Swaraj propaganda. All over India it was praised and quoted extensively. It was used as a text to preach the necessity of immediate change in the government of the country. The agitation for Home Rule was pushed forward with added vigour and fervour. Shortly after this speech the Indian politicians were further heartened by Mr. Montagu's appointment by Lloyd George as Secretary of State for India.

On August 20th, 1917, Mr. Montagu made this historic declaration in the House of Commons: "The policy of His Majesty's Government, with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire. . . . I would add that progress in this policy can only be achieved by successive stages. The British Government and the Government of

India, on whom the responsibility lies for the welfare and advancement of the Indian peoples, must be the judges of the time and measure of each advance, and they must be guided by the co-operation received from those upon whom new opportunities of service will thus be conferred and by the extent to which it is found that confidence can be reposed in their sense of responsibility." At the same time Montagu announced the Cabinet's decision that he should go to India almost immediately to consult and look into things on the spot. This was an unusual step; for the first time an important Cabinet Minister was being sent out to India to consult the people about their political future. The Indian leaders, particularly the Nationalists, noted with satisfaction the new trend in the British attitude. They welcomed it as far as it went, but at the same time they refused to go into ecstasies over the pronouncement. Tilak advised his party to give the Parliamentary declaration the welcome it deserved but to wait and see whether the performance lived up to the promise. Not that he was distrustful of the Montagu declaration; but his political sense and his knowledge of the British character had taught him to be cautious. There were still the Indian Government officials to be reckoned with, and they would put up stiff opposition to any liberal advance Mr. Montagu and Mr. Lloyd George might be contemplating. Prime Ministers and Secretaries of State came and went; bureaucracy was always there. It was the *de facto* ruling power in India, "with its vested interests, its domineering habits, its unquestioned authority, its racial exclusiveness and accustomed to enjoy power and pelf as its natural prerogative".[1]

Although it was an advance "in the right direction", Tilak called the Montagu announcement "unsatisfactory, both in language and in substance". He advised the Nationalist Party and the country to accept the "spirit of the policy statement but to continue to demand the release of Mrs. Besant and other internees as an earnest of the good intentions of the Government and to keep up the agitation for the better recognition of Indian aspirations and demands as embodied in the Congress League scheme."

The Moderates, on the other hand, almost lost their heads in their enthusiasm at the "golden prospects opened up by the Parliamentary announcement". They "welcomed the declaration as the Magna Carta of India". They, too, wanted the internees released but they

[1] Shri Bishan Dhar—Congress Presidential speech 1911–12.

shifted their emphasis from political agitation to "an educative campaign" in preparation for the coming visit of the Secretary of State. In short, a British announcement had once again caused a split in the ranks of Indian political parties.

In November the Montagu Mission arrived in India and began its work of consultation and inquiry. Tilak led the Indian Home Rule League deputation and had many interviews with the Secretary of State. On the first occasion Mrs. Besant, set free at last, with her two associates, in September 1917, went with him. She carried a garland of flowers and asked Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy, if she might put it round his neck. He refused but took it in his hands. Tilak did not wait to be refused. He put his garland round Montagu's neck without any preliminaries.

The Secretary of State was a little embarrassed by this oriental welcome. He records, "Tilak placed the garland round my neck so that, if it gets out, it will be found that I have been garlanded by the renowned Tilak who is only a few years out of seven years' penal servitude for being, at any rate indirectly, connected by his newspaper writings with the murder of an Indian official". On November 27th, Montagu saw Tilak again. It was a private interview at the end of which he wrote in his diary, "We saw Tilak, the politician who probably has the greatest influence of any person in India, and who is very extreme. His procession to Delhi to see me was a veritable triumphant one. He was really the author of the Congress League scheme. . . . It was quite obvious that he was not going to be satisfied with anything but what the Congress asks for. 'We shall take whatever the Government gives us,' he said, 'but it will not satisfy us unless it is at least what the Congress asks.'"

Soon after these interviews Tilak attended the Calcutta Congress presided over by Mrs. Besant. His party comprised five hundred Nationalist delegates and they took with them a petition signed by 1,200,000 men and women in support of the demand for Indian Home Rule. Tilak, it may be mentioned, had voluntarily renounced the presidency of the Congress which Bengal had offered to him and had himself sponsored Mrs. Besant as president.

It was a moving spectacle when the whole audience, 12,000 strong, rose as one man as Tilak entered the Congress pendal. His reception was unparalleled. The newspapers described him as the "uncrowned king of India". His prestige never stood higher than

in those days of the Calcutta Congress, even though he was taking a middle-of-the-road attitude on the Montagu declaration. Some of his followers, especially Bipin Chandra Pal, were advocating its outright rejection. Tilak, however, prevailed on them to accept the declaration when he spoke on the following resolution: "This Congress expresses grateful satisfaction for the pronouncement made by His Majesty's Secretary of State for India on behalf of the Imperial Government that its object is the establishment of Responsible Government in India. This Congress strongly urges the necessity of the immediate enactment of a Parliamentary Statute providing for the establishment of Responsible Government in India, the full measure to be attained within a time limit, to be fixed in the Statute itself, at an early date. This Congress is emphatically of opinion that the Congress League Scheme of Reforms ought to be introduced by a Statute as the first step in the process."

"Mr. Pal," said Tilak, "seems to think that it is not yet time to be grateful for the declaration of policy. To a certain extent I share that view, but at the same time I would say that 'gratitude' means expectation of favours to come and 'grateful satisfaction', viewed in the terms of that definition, means satisfaction at the pronouncement attended with an expectation that the later stages of it will come as early as possible. . . . A very simple definition of Home Rule, which any of you, including a peasant, can understand, is that I should be in my own country what an Englishman is in England. All those high-sounding phrases such as 'partnership in the Empire', 'terms of equality', etc., mean that I want to be in my country not a foreigner but a master in the same sense that an Englishman is a master in his own country. That is complete Home Rule."

On the question of timing, Tilak said, "We want the stages to be determined *by us* and not at the sweet will of the Executive. Nor do we want any compromise about it, but insist on definite stages and the time to be fixed in the Act itself so that the whole scheme may work automatically". After Tilak's speech all opposition from the Extremist side vanished and the resolution was carried unanimously.

In the early part of 1918 Tilak toured the country collecting funds for the Home Rule League deputation which was to travel to England to press the case for home rule. At this time he was also preparing to fight his lawsuit against Sir Valentine Chirol who had defamed him in his book *Indian Unrest*. Tilak intended to combine

this with his work on the Home Rule deputation. It is significant of his popularity that in less than three months he was able to collect more than Rs.200,000 for the deputation. The August declaration had made him more determined than ever to extend his activities to Great Britain. On his insistence the Lucknow Congress had previously agreed to send such a deputation but the idea was dropped on the advice of Sir William Wedderburn. Tilak again took up the question with the Congress leaders at Calcutta but found them lukewarm in their support. Some of them were perhaps scared at the danger from U-boats on a long sea voyage. Tilak had no terrors of this kind. When he announced his decision to sail for London himself, M. S. Aney, a loyal friend and follower, feared for his safety, but Tilak replied, "Don't worry about me. I have no fear of death. I carry the destiny of my country in my hands and I have full faith in the future."

Tilak was fully alive to the danger of the anti-Indian propaganda being put out by retired Anglo-Indians and ex-Governors like Lord Sydenham, who had recently formed the Indo-British Association with the sole object of opposing the new policy of reform. In these circumstances Tilak now decided that he would himself lead the Home Rule deputation to London and sent on Mr. Joseph Baptista in advance to prepare the ground and make contact with the Labour Party.

When he went back to Poona from Calcutta he put the final touches to his programme and decided who were to form the deputation: Tilak himself, G. S. Khaparde, Bipin Chandra Pal, N. C. Kelkar and Dadasaheb Karandikar. There was no boat due to sail for England from Bombay, but a Japanese steamer would be sailing from Colombo in April, so the deputation went off to Colombo. There something went seriously wrong: the passports given to Tilak and his deputation were suddenly cancelled on the urgent instructions, they were told, of the War Cabinet in London.

All this cat-and-mouse business about Tilak's journey took place, be it noted, while the Liberal Secretary of State, Mr. Montagu, was himself in India. At the time no one knew just what the real reasons were for the sudden cancellation of the passports. The Government of India merely pointed to the War Cabinet and put on an innocent look. But the truth was that the damaging and unscrupulous report about Tilak which Lord Chelmsford's Home Secretary had sent to

London was at the bottom of all this trouble. This came out when Montagu's *Indian Diary* was first published in 1930. Writing on April 15th, 1917, he observes: "The Tilak incident was very characteristic. Passports were issued to him and his friends without reference to me, but, in issuing them, it seems to me that the Government were clearly right. Tilak had to go home to fight the Chirol case; and to stop his expedition at the time that the papers were full of Lord Sydenham's activities would have been a fatal mistake. But, having allowed him to go home, either out of sheer malice or crass stupidity, the Home Department, without reference to the Viceroy, sent home a telegram containing so black a picture of Tilak's antecedents and probable activities that I do not wonder the Home Government were nervous. It seems a little strange, however, that they should have cancelled a passport given by a duly authorized authority without consulting him. However, it was done. I drafted for the Viceroy a telegram of protest, which was ultimately sent, with a request for reconsideration. It has failed; the Home Government refused to let him sail, mainly on the ground that the General Staff will not have it.... The only thing I am confident about is that they will handle Tilak stupidly when he returns."

With his passport cancelled, Tilak had no choice but to return to Poona. There he gave some of his time to campaigning among the youth of India to urge them to join the Army. He, and his supporters like K. P. Khadilkar, went on tours to impress on their countrymen how important it was that they should join the Army. This soon earned for Tilak the popular title of "Britain's recruiting sergeant". The truth was that Tilak had realized the changes that modern warfare had brought, and how they had weakened Britain's position. In *Kesari* he wrote, "Until now, with her undisputed supremacy on the seas, Britain was able to defend her far-flung Empire from London, the centre of her power. But this supremacy on the surface of the waters is now challenged and considerably undermined by the advent of enemy submarines and the laying of minefields in and around harbours. Even in land warfare a revolutionary change has been brought about by the introduction of trench-fighting, aeroplane attacks and long-range artillery." All this, he went on, had compelled the British military experts to revise their ideas about India and her defence. "The native Indian Army's role was, according to the old conception, confined to the defence of India, but the new

situation in Europe has forced the military authorities to give up this narrow conception. They have realized that they cannot rely solely on naval supremacy. They must send thousands of soldiers to France to fight alongside the French if Germany is to be defeated." Moreover, said Tilak, the Indian Government could no longer rely on the tribal Muslim soldiers of the North-Western Province: "German influence and intrigue has reached Kabul in Afghanistan via Turkey and Persia."

In conclusion he appealed to the youth of India to join the Army: "They must prepare to defend the Motherland if they demand Swaraj. This is the time for educated young men to join the Army even if the conditions are not ideal or as we would desire them to be. The time-spirit which has compelled the Government of India to change its military policy, will also enable India to realize her military aspirations and ideals. To join the Army now is the vital duty of every young Indian—it is indeed an amalgam of loyalty, patriotism and politics."

Tilak's efforts were strikingly successful. University graduates and students from all over Maharashtra began to enrol, not in hundreds, but in thousands. What the military recruiting officers could not do in six months Tilak did in six weeks. But help from such an ally was too much for the British authorities. They showed alarm rather than gratitude at Tilak's success and even accused him of hindering their recruiting campaign. Nor did they stop at words. They served a notice on him on July 31st, 1918 under the Defence of India Act, the DORA of India—prohibiting him from making public speeches in the Presidency of Bombay.

But Montagu was forthright about Tilak and his ability to help the Government in the war effort. Referring to the War Conference held at Delhi he writes: "I have also had a telegram from Chelmsford, at last, giving an account of the meeting at Delhi. As I predicted, the exclusion of Tilak, who is, after all, the biggest leader in India at the moment, had a bad effect, and unanimity had been difficult. . . . If I were the Viceroy I would have had him at Delhi at all costs. He is at the moment probably the most powerful man in India and he has it in his power, if he chooses, to help materially in the war effort."

But the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, and his Anglo-Indian advisers were quite lacking in such wisdom and understanding. They not

only missed the chance of winning over Tilak but they even scorned his help, and so widened the gulf between the Indian masses and the British rulers. In fact many people think the Government's treatment of Tilak at this time went a long way to strengthen the demand for Home Rule. Sir Michael O'Dwyer in the Punjab, Lord Willingdon in Bombay, and Lord Pentland in Madras must be held largely responsible for the bitter atmosphere created in India. Inadvertently they helped to push the British Raj in India to the verge of disaster. Tilak was too old a campaigner to let himself be gagged by a ban on speeches. While still obeying the letter of the Government's ban, he found a way of carrying on his agitation for Home Rule just the same. He would preside over huge meetings but remain silent throughout the proceedings while at his side speaker after speaker harangued the audience, explaining the cause of the President's silence. This proved even more effective than if Tilak himself had been speaking.

25

THE TILAK-CHIROL LIBEL CASE

The honest man must endure hatred and envy. It adds to a man's worth when hatred pursues him.

GOTTFRIED VON STRASSBURG

In September 1918, Tilak was at last told that he was free to go to England. Accompanied by R. P. Karandikar, Wasudeorao Joshi and Ganapatrao Namjoshi he sailed from Bombay on September 19th, reaching London on October 30th.

We have already seen how in March Tilak had to return from Colombo and postpone his journey to England indefinitely. But in the intervening six months the Government of India changed its mind and decided to allow him to go if he undertook "not to make public speeches" on his arrival. The authorities were anxious to limit his activities to the libel suit against Sir Valentine Chirol. But they knew quite well that he intended to lead the Home Rule deputation while he was in England and try to rouse British public opinion in favour of India's political demands. To restrict his activities in this way would make fresh difficulties for Tilak. But that was not all. By imposing such restrictions on him the Governor was, in effect, proclaiming to the world that Tilak was a "dangerous character". This was bound to prejudice any British jury against him.

Also important in this connection was the publication of the report of the "Sedition Committee" presided over by Mr. Justice Rowlatt. It came out in April and had wide publicity in England and India. Was not this also a deliberate attempt to influence British public opinion against Tilak? The Report starts with the Rand Murder of 1897 in Poona and states that "Indications of a revolutionary movement were first observed in Western India in connection with the development of two classes of annual festivals,

namely, those in honour of the Hindu God Ganapati and those in honour of the Maratha leader, Sivaji, who united the people of the Deccan against their Mohammedan rulers".

Then the report goes through the whole gamut of Tilak's writings in the *Kesari* in connection with the plague administration, his first and second sedition trials, the Nasik conspiracy case, Jackson's murder, the Swadeshi agitation, etc., and concludes that as far as Western India was concerned "all the conspiracies were Brahmin and mostly Chitpavan.

"The Chaphekars and their associates were ultra-orthodox and, perhaps consequently, anti-Mohammedan and anti-British. They had no definite political aims, but were daring in the execution of any outrage which they thought would prove their hatred of the British or satisfy their desire to punish supposed oppression.

"Their principal crime, the Rand murder, was effected at a time when Tilak, the most prominent journalist in the Deccan, was publishing incitements to his countrymen to strike a blow for independence and disregard the limitations of the Penal Code.

"The Savarkar conspiracy of Nasik and the other smaller plots which were mere eddies spreading from the same centre were the result of somewhat similar causes.

"As a primary exciting cause we must point to the virulent anti-British writings of the Chitpavan Press in Poona appealing both to religious and racial sentiment. It would have been surprising if impressionable youths of that community had not, under the influence of such teachings, conceived designs for ending the alien rule in India by violence. The leader of the Poona Extremists was Tilak."[1]

Having thus carefully prepared the ground by building up prejudice against Tilak, the Government of India let him have a passport. He was in a dilemma. If he did not accept the conditional offer and refused to go, Chirol and his supporters would take it as a sign of weakness and Tilak would be open to the charge of evading the consequences of an action which he himself had instituted; on the other hand, to go to London with his character smirched by the conditions imposed on him was to enter knowingly the trap which had been laid by the Government. Many of his friends urged him to refuse the condition and allow the libel case to take its course. But Tilak, trusting to the democratic justice of Britain and his own clear

[1] The Sedition Committee Report, 1918.



The Home Rule League Deputation on the eve of sailing for London

R. P. Karandikar *N. C. Kelkar*

Bipin Chandra Pal *B. G. Tilak* *G. S. Khaparde*

conscience, decided to ignore this advice and go to London. He wrote to the Government of India and accepted their condition "under protest", but giving notice at the same time that he would try to get the order rescinded once he got to England.

This background knowledge is important to the understanding of the complicated pattern of the libel suit. The action was based on certain sweeping statements derogatory to Tilak made by Sir Valentine Chirol in his book *Indian Unrest*, published in 1910. Tilak was unable to take action against the author when the book was first published as he was then serving the sentence of six years in Mandalay.

Sir Valentine, when he was director of the Imperial and Foreign Department of *The Times* newspaper, visited India in 1910 to study the growth of unrest. He collected material for a series of articles which he wrote for *The Times* and later published in book form under the title *Indian Unrest*.

At the outset of his inquiry Chirol noted "a lull in the storm of unrest" which had lately "swept over India". But what he asked himself was, Does the lull indicate "a gradual and steady return to more normal and peaceful conditions? Or, as in other cyclonic disturbances in tropical climes, does it merely presage fiercer outbursts yet to come? Has the blended policy of repression and concession adopted by Lord Morley and Lord Minto really cowed the forces of criminal disorder and rallied the representatives of moderate opinion to the cause of sober and constitutional progress? Or has it come too late either permanently to arrest the former or to restore confidence and courage to the latter?" After long and laborious work Chirol produced his book, whose main conclusion was that there was no very great unrest in India and what there was, was confined to a few districts in Maharashtra, the Central Provinces, Bengal, and the Punjab. These conclusions were based mainly on the files of the Extremist newspapers and the C.I.D. reports against Tilak and other Nationalist Party leaders. The Provincial Governments placed their secret and confidential files at the disposal of Chirol, who looked upon his work as a valuable vindication of their policy of repression. He says as much: "In writing my book *Indian Unrest* in 1910 I relied largely in regard to Tilak on information from official sources placed at my disposal by Sir George Clarke. . . . He was of opinion that I was rendering a public service in seeking to enlighten English

readers as to the political methods and aims of a man who had misused his great capabilities for the purpose of discrediting and undermining British rule, and that it was therefore in the public interest that I should receive a considerable measure of assistance." The assistance did not end there; it continued throughout the preparation of his defence and the subsequent trial. We shall see presently that although it was Chirol that Tilak had sued, the Government of India fought the case with all the resources of a State at its command, just as though it was itself on trial. History, in fact, was repeating itself in this libel suit, for just as in the Tai Maharaj case the Government identified itself with the widow so in this case it lined itself up alongside Chirol.

We need not go into the masses of evidence produced in this case, nor into the long and tedious cross-examinations; suffice it to say that after consulting the best advice available in Bombay and London, Tilak filed the suit for libel and for an injunction to restrain Sir Valentine Chirol and his publishers from publishing the matter complained of. After nearly three years of delay, partly due to the war, the case came up for hearing in the King's Bench Division in London before Mr. Justice Darling and a special jury. Sir John Simon, K.C. and Mr. E. F. Spence appeared as Counsel for the Plaintiff, and Sir Edward Carson, K.C., M.P., Sir Ellis Hume-Williams, K.C., M.P., and Mr. Eustace Hills appeared as Counsel for the Defendants.

Tilak's contention was that Chirol had libelled him in *Indian Unrest* in six different ways. Though Tilak had never formed or subscribed to any societies for protecting cows, he was accused by Chirol of having started them in order to provoke the Mohammedans. Though Tilak had never organized gymnastic societies, Chirol charged him with having done so with the object of developing the war-like instincts of the people so that force could be used against the British rule. These gymnastic societies were also described by Chirol as "juvenile bands of dacoits to swell the coffers of Swaraj". According to Chirol, the High Court judgment of 1910 in the Tai Maharaj case was "extremely damaging to Tilak's private reputation as a man of honour or even of common honesty".

Most damaging of all were Chirol's libels about the Rand-Ayerst and the Jackson murders: "What Tilak could do by secret agitation and by a rabid campaign in the Press to raise popular resentment to

white-heat he did. . . . The inevitable consequences ensued. On June 22nd, 1897 . . . Mr. Rand and Lieutenant Ayerst . . . were shot down by a young Chitpavan Brahmin. No direct connection has been established between the crime and Tilak." (*Indian Unrest*, p. 48.)

"In reply to the Magistrate who asked him why he committed the murder, Kanhere said, 'I read of many instances of oppression in the *Kesari*, the *Rashtra Mata* and the *Kal* and other newspapers. I think that by killing Sahibs we people can get justice. I never got injustice myself, nor did anyone I know of. I now regret killing Mr. Jackson. I killed a good man causelessly.'

"Can anything be more eloquent and convincing than the terrible pathos of this confession? The three papers named by Kanhere were Tilak's organs. It was no personal experience or knowledge of his that had driven Kanhere to his frenzied deed, but the slow, persistent poison dropped into his ear by the Tilak Press. Though it was Kanhere's hand that struck down 'a good man causelessly', was not Tilak, rather than Kanhere, the real author of the murder? It was merely the story of the Poona murders of 1897 over again." (*Indian Unrest*, p. 62.) These were the passages Tilak's counsel claimed were libels.

In a crowded Court, dimly lit as British Courts so often are, the *cause célèbre* began its course on a cold, grey morning—January 29th, 1919. Sir John Simon, a tall, lean figure in his middle forties, and with a reputation for liberal politics and still more for his legal acumen and courtesy, opened the case for Tilak. His address to the Court lasted seven hours.

Tilak then went into the witness box and was examined by Mr. Spence. Sir Edward Carson, "the terror of the English Bar", followed and began his cross-examination of Tilak which lasted for two and a half days—nearly fifteen hours. It would be an ordeal at any time for any man to have to face a fearsome, ruthless and not too scrupulous man like Carson. But for Tilak, who had become so frail on account of his great sufferings and whose sight and hearing were rapidly failing, Carson's cross-examination was more than an ordeal; it was a truly gruelling experience. In spite of all this he withstood the strain fairly well and at times he gave back more than he got from Chirol's counsel. At one stage Carson was trying to get Tilak to admit that the British Government in India and the British

officials were the same thing, and in his overbearing manner asked the witness, "But a Government must consist of officials; it is not an abstract entity?" Swiftly came the reply, "A house consists of rooms, but a room does not mean a house." On another occasion Carson said, "Now Mr. Tilak, do you really wish us to believe that the partition of Bengal, the mere division of a province into two geographical units, did lead to a movement to manufacture and throw bombs?" Tilak replied, "Why yes, of course! Did not the same thing happen in the case of Ireland and Ulster?" "Never mind Ulster," growled Carson, "Ulster will take care of itself. You will not gain anything by trying to introduce personal matters into the case!" He was clearly upset. But Tilak pressed home the attack, adding, "I am not introducing personal matters into the case. You will find Ireland quoted in the articles." Diwan Chaman Lal, a member of the Indian Parliament and a senior advocate in the Supreme Court of India, who witnessed this particular passage-at-arms between Carson and Tilak, writes of it, "The Irishman in Carson flared up, the great lawyer losing his temper like a petulant child."

Carson must have realized the weakness of his defence, for he concentrated on the two sedition trials of Tilak and evaded the real crux of the libel charge, namely, Chirol's accusation that Tilak's writings were the cause of murders in Poona and Nasik. Tilak's sedition and the political murders were treated by Carson as cause and effect. He was clearly appealing to the imperialist in the average Englishman. Sir John Simon did his best to make the point that Tilak was not complaining of being called a writer of seditious articles. In any case, he argued, in Tilak's first trial (in 1897, when Mr. Rand was murdered by the Chaphekar brothers) "both the prosecution and the judge expressly and carefully disclaimed any suggestion that Tilak was responsible for the murder of Mr. Rand." What was true of the murder of Rand was truer still of the murder of Mr. Jackson at Nasik in 1909. Not only was there no mention of Jackson in *Kesari* but at the time of his murder Tilak was serving his sentence in Mandalay nearly 1,500 miles away from Nasik. Sir John repeatedly brought these facts to the notice of the jury and tried to demolish the elaborate defence set up by his formidable adversary. But his logic and reason were powerless against the impassioned appeals of Carson, who asked the jury to consider the interests of the

Empire rather than the justice of the case. "Gentlemen," he said to the jury, "may I make this observation once more here? Is there in your experience an incident of a man with a history like that coming into a Court of Justice and asking a British jury to assess the value of his character on a libel which says that his writings were calculated to lead to murder? The value of his character! There is not a coin in existence which would be the value of his character. Even supposing we were not able to satisfy you—as I hope we have been in this case—as to the truth of every word that we have said of him, what is the value of his character? . . . We know something of libel actions in this Court, and you know that they are brought by people who from time to time want to clear their character, but those are cases in which men have come because something has been said which would be an injury to them, having regard to the honourable careers that they have led in the past and the honourable careers they mean to lead in the future. But what is the value of the character of Mr. Tilak?" Then again: "I am bound to put to you the importance of this case from a public point of view. You are really asked, and that is the object of his coming here, to set him up in India as a man who can continue the course of action which he adopted in his Press, and that he was right, notwithstanding these decisions of the judges out there in his cases, to do it with impunity. I need hardly remind you of the far-reaching effect of such a verdict as that on the peace of the Government of India and on the difficulties of the white officials out there who do their duty so well to the country."

One would expect Carson, the defending counsel, to be biased in the presentation of the case. But not the judge. Yet Mr. Justice Darling showed himself violently anti-Tilak in his summing up. At its very outset he observed, "Gentlemen, the Plaintiff says that he has been guilty of sedition. There is no doubt about it. He has written or published many articles for years of his life which are seditious, and seditious in what sense? Is it an exaggeration to say that the effect of them, often veiled in the obscurity of language, was to denounce the Government of India by the English, and to do what he could to bring it into disrepute? It is all very well to talk and say: 'Oh, it is only sedition!' What is worse than sedition, than high treason? Do you know exactly where the line can be drawn between one and the other? For high treason it would be necessary

to prove something more than you prove for sedition. It is necessary to prove an overt act, but where you get a country, as Mr. Justice Davar said,[1] seething with sedition, how long a step is it to the other by bomb or anything else you like, which interprets into action that which the seditious newspaper has preached?" Later the Judge reminded the jury of Tilak's agitation for Swadeshi: "These Swadeshi people put English goods on the fire. You remember the passage in which they were advised the great point was not to buy English things? Use only the things produced in India, if you can get them, boycott others, but above all boycott the English; do not use the English things; if the thing can be got from Germany, get it from Germany. . . . Why? There was another movement at the same moment, and you had the evidence as to that of the Plaintiff himself, Swaraj. He said, when he was in the box, that means self-government within the Empire. But did it mean only that? You have the articles. Swaraj means independence. How soon does independence within the Empire develop into a separate republic, with a parliament of its own?" And about the character of Tilak the Judge has this to say: ". . . . He was prohibited from making speeches. Why? Because he set to work—so little good had that judge done him and so little good had the transportation done him that he had to be prohibited and he was prohibited from making any speech—because he was going about dissuading the people of India from entering the British Army, when we were, as you know, ever since 1914 down to November last, fighting for our lives against the greatest military power that ever existed. The same point with regard to which he had said: 'Buy German goods; buy any goods, but do not buy English goods,' the articles of commerce of that same power he would rather have had in India than the goods made in this country and that at a time when we were fighting that power and fighting for our lives and wanted the help of every man in the Army and every woman to make cartridges with which to supply them. What was his love for the English Raj? He had to be prohibited from making speeches at all because he was making, in the circumstances, speeches that were designed to weaken the power of this country by getting the people not to join the Army to fight that enemy.

"Gentlemen, that is the man who comes to you for damages . . . a man of whom one of his countrymen, occupying the position of a

[1] A reference to Tilak's sedition trial of 1908.

judge, said what I have just read to you . . . his character must be thoroughly well known by men of his own race. That is the man who comes to you today. His latest act was such that he had to be prohibited from opening his mouth in India."

Nearing the end of his summing up, the judge expressed his real anxiety if the jury gave its verdict in Tilak's favour. "Gentlemen," he said, "it is a most serious case. I do not know that I have ever tried so serious a case, having regard to what may be the consequences of it." And finally he asked the jury to ignore Sir John Simon's plea to give their verdict separately on the six separate counts of libel which were put in the statement of claim: "Now Gentlemen, I have not left this case to you in a number of little packets, libel number one, libel number two, and so on; nothing of the kind. . . . I do not think it is a fair way to look at it, to cut this up into little snippets and say: 'Is there a libel there or is that fair comment?'" At this point Mr. Spence interposed and pointed out: "My learned leader had not invited your Lordship to do so." The judge replied: "I have said, invited or not, I am not going to do so, Mr. Spence." Counsel persisted however: "Your Lordship will understand that I make the application." "And I refuse it," rejoined Mr. Justice Darling.

The jury retired at 5.30 p.m. and returned at 6.17 p.m. with a unanimous verdict for the defendant. That was on February 21st, the eleventh day of the hearing of the case.

Thus ended the libel case.

26

THE CASE FROM INSIDE

The verdict of the British jury was a severe blow; momentarily Tilak seemed to reel under it. Supported by two of his colleagues, he slowly went down the steps from the court-room. He looked back once or twice but said nothing. He appeared distraught; no one spoke. But after those few moments he recovered and, turning to Diwan Chaman Lal, said, "Chaman, I could have obtained this sort of justice in India". And certainly that was the feeling in India about the verdict, for there was hardly a newspaper in the country —excepting, of course, the Anglo-Indian section—which did not condemn the verdict as "a miscarriage of justice", or as "atrocious" or "scandalous".

In Britain *The Times* expressed its deep satisfaction at the result of the libel case and showered sympathy and praise on Chirol, saying that he "was actuated throughout by the loftiest public spirit and that he *rendered valuable service to the cause of British rule* by flatly refusing to make any admission which would have left Mr. Tilak free to pursue with an enhanced reputation the courses so severely condemned." The newspaper concluded: "The case was serious because if Mr. Tilak had succeeded in his action, the inevitable though erronous assumption of the public in India would have been that his past offences had been whitewashed. It was still more serious because a verdict adverse to Sir Valentine Chirol might have had the deplorable result of preventing in future the free and candid exposure of movements in India (and elsewhere) hostile to the state."

The *Morning Post* and other Tory newspapers wrote in a similar vein, but the *Daily Herald*, the Socialist paper, observed: "Despite the 'judicious pronouncements' and the verdict... we do not believe for a moment that Mr. Tilak has favoured a policy of violence. He

stands in this regard above even Sir Edward Carson. And he is even less seditious than the present Lord High Chancellor."

The comments on the case made by *The Times* and other conservative newspapers are a clear indication that they thought of it in terms of political expediency and imperial interests rather than of justice and fair play, and this shook the faith of many Moderate leaders in the impartiality of British justice. The *Modern Review* of Calcutta bluntly stated that "Tilak has not had justice in its proper sense of the British or any other variety and we do not think any the worse of him because he has lost his case." The *Leader* of Allahabad, edited by C. Y. Chintamani (later Sir C. Y. Chintamani), a loyal supporter of British rule in India said, ". . . . Mr. Tilak's countrymen cannot endorse Sir Edward Carson's opinion that 'he had had the most profound British justice'." It is notorious that Mr. Tilak was never fortunate in having real justice whenever he came into political conflict with the British Raj. The *Leader* went on, "He was awarded eighteen months in 1897 on the flagrant misinterpretation by the late Arthur Strachey of 'disaffection' as meaning 'absence of affection'. The later sentence of six years' transportation was monstrously severe. On both occasions the Indians who were in the jury returned a verdict of not guilty, and they alone knew the language in which the impugned articles were written. In the present case itself it came out that the defence received valuable assistance from the Government of Bombay which gave him access to private documents in the archives of the State and even officials of that Government were virtually placed on special duty to unearth material for him. If all this is part of the 'profound British justice', then its value will have to be assessed differently. . . . Sir John Simon vainly pleaded that 'even the Devil should have his due'. That unnameable being might conceivably have it but Mr. Tilak has not had it although he is far from being a 'Devil'. Nothing will deter any of his countrymen from acknowledging his great qualities of ability, courage, patriotism, determination and purposefulness."

Bad luck dogged Tilak throughout the case, in more senses than one. When he decided to lodge the complaint, he had asked his solicitors to engage the best counsel possible. His solicitors thereupon approached Sir Edward Carson who consented to take up the case and was duly retained on behalf of the Plaintiff. Unfortunately for Tilak Carson became a member of the War Cabinet in 1917.

Consequently he threw down all his briefs and Tilak's solicitors had to make a new choice. Simon being the next best available counsel he was duly briefed. Then came fortune's worst kick. Carson resigned his Cabinet post and resumed his practice at the British Bar in March 1918. Chirol took advantage of this turn of fortune and engaged him for his defence. A complaint was lodged against this, on the grounds that since Carson was previously retained on behalf of Tilak, he could not now take up a brief from his opponent. The court, however, found that Carson had merely received a retainer; this did not mean that he had probed into the evidence in the case. He could not therefore be debarred from appearing on behalf of Chirol.

So it was certainly an unlucky day when Tilak decided to file the libel suit. At the time he did not perhaps realize the odds against him. He sued Chirol as an individual, but the Government of India stepped in and fought the case as if it was itself on trial. Tilak certainly had not anticipated that this would happen. Material evidence such as the *Autobiography of Chaphekar* and the *Biographical Sketch of Tilak* compiled by the Secret Service of the Government of Bombay were placed at Chirol's disposal by the Government, but access to these documents was denied to the plaintiff. We have already quoted from Chirol's letter in which he admits that when he wrote about Tilak he had very largely relied on these and similar secret documents supplied to him by officials.

The Government of India not only helped Chirol by supplying him with their files on Tilak but had also offered him financial help to fight the case. In his memorandum to the Government of India on July 16th, 1917, Chirol writes: "Mr. Curtis (of the Government of Bombay) further held out to me the prospect that the Government would take over, or at least make a very substantial contribution to my own costs in the action. Mr. Lowndes, however, though expressing his own personal sympathy with this last proposal, held that it would be inexpedient to put it forward formally until after the trial was over and the whole case concluded. I myself concurred in Mr. Lowndes' views on this point, though I welcomed Mr. Curtis' proposal as an earnest that the Government had recognized the identity of their interests and mine in the action."

Lord Hardinge, who was the Viceroy and Governor-General of India in March 1916, felt a little uneasy at the amount of official help Chirol was asking for and receiving; he therefore referred the

matter to the Secretary of State for India in London. But his advisers, R. H. Craddock and G. R. Lowndes, were not prepared to wait for a reply which was expected in ten days. Their joint memorandum to the Viceroy reveals how jittery the Government had become since Tilak instituted the libel case. They wrote on March 20th:

"Sir Valentine Chirol is now the defendant in a libel action, which if successful will not only mulct him in damages for the public service that he rendered but will also have the effect of rehabilitating the political character of Tilak, a result which would be a very serious political evil.

"We have therefore to consider not only that we are bound in honour not to leave Sir Valentine Chirol in the lurch, but also that serious political disadvantages might result if Tilak won his action. These two considerations are both entitled to weight; but there is a third which is even stronger.

"It is inevitable that the trial will disclose that Sir Valentine Chirol obtained the information on which his book is based from Government sources, and consequently a successful suit by Tilak against Sir Valentine Chirol might possibly be the prelude to a further suit against the Government charging them with publication of libellous matter. Reports made by the Criminal Investigation Department, etc., to the Government would no doubt ordinarily be privileged, but the privilege would be forfeited by their disclosure to a third party with the knowledge that he intended to publish their contents, which under the circumstances we could hardly deny.

"We are therefore fully justified in looking ahead and preparing our own defence against a contingency by no means remote. The placing of an officer on special duty is a step therefore which may be taken boldly on the hypothesis that the attack of today against Sir Valentine Chirol may be the attack of tomorrow against ourselves. The defence would in both cases be identical in substance, and in collecting information which may help Sir Valentine Chirol we are collecting information which we require for ourselves."

This was precisely what the Government did. Mr. A. Montgomerie, I.C.S., an assistant judge, was put on special duty to study the case, advise the Government of India as to what assistance it could give to Chirol, prepare his defence, and go to London to explain the case to his counsel. Mr. Montgomerie made a very good

job of all this, and the report he submitted to the Government is most revealing. He looked at the case objectively and on nearly every point came to the conclusion that Sir Valentine Chirol had no adequate defence to jusify the alleged libels. Take for instance the question of the societies opposing the killing of cows. In Mr. Montgomerie's view: "The preaching of cow protection in Bombay was like the Ulsterman's Orange Cockade, rather a provocative symbol than a cause of the bad feeling between the Hindus and the Mohammedans." Further on he suggests that Tilak's anti-Mohammedan spirit could be deduced by reference to his writings on the music question, the Ganapati celebrations and the Shivaji movement, but on the question of cow protection he was of the opinion that "the true defence to this part of the action lies in making a frank admission that so far as insistence is laid on the active participation of Tilak in anti-cow-killing propaganda, the Defendant has made a mistake" and pleads fair comment. About the libel over the gymnastic societies Mr. Montgomerie frankly states that "the C.I.D. life of Tilak and Mr. Down's report have a common origin, namely, notes contributed by Mr. Brewin[1] to Sir Charles Ollivant who "was in a state of nerves". Mr. Brewin's views on Tilak were proved to be "alarmist by facts" but he made them alarmist because Sir Charles wanted them to be so! "It is true," Mr. Montgomerie continues, "that Mr. Down's report attempts by somewhat specious reasoning to fasten on Tilak the moral responsibility for setting up the Chaphekar Club which is obviously the one which Sir Valentine Chirol had in mind but that is something much less definite and much less serious than the clear statement which is now sued on that Tilak 'proceeded to organize such societies'. . . . The libel which accuses Tilak of having organized the Chaphekar Club there is no possibility of justifying."

With regard to the Nasik case, Mr. Montgomerie declared the evidence to be of the slightest—extending hardly further than the discovery during searches of the houses of the accused of Tilak's portrait or poems dealing with him. But that could not implicate Tilak unless some active participation in the organization of the society were first shown. "If all the 'Moonlighters' in Ireland," writes Mr. Montgomerie, "were shown to possess Mr. Gladstone's speeches on Home Rule and if every cottage had a framed oleograph

[1] Mr. Down and Mr. Brewin were C.I.D. officers in the Presidency of Bombay.

of him on its walls it would not justify the allegation that he had organized the Clan-na-geal or that it was his society."

On the blackmail issue Montgomerie says, "I have been unable to discover in *Kesari* or the *Mahratta* any systematic appeals for funds or any attacks on people for not subscribing. It is easy enough to show that Tilak could 'use the lash' on occasion on all and sundry. But that is irrelevant. It must be shown that he used it to raise subscriptions." As regards justifying this libel Mr. Montgomerie says, "I do not know how he (Sir Valentine Chirol) is to do so or what grounds he had for making the statement."

All through the ten-thousand-word defence analysis prepared for the benefit of the Government of India and later used in briefing Sir Valentine Chirol's counsel in London, Mr. Montgomerie has been scrupulously trying to play down the possibility of defending the libel suit successfully. This does not mean, however, that he was not trying at the same time to suggest ways and means of bringing in material which, though irrelevant to the alleged libels, would help to create an atmosphere of prejudice against Tilak. For this purpose he went through hundreds of back numbers of *Kesari* and *Mahratta*, the official records of the two sedition trials, and the secret histories of dozens of conspirators. He carefully tabulated extracts from Tilak's newspapers which were later used by Sir Edward Carson. Even after all this Mr. Montgomerie still was not sure how the case would go, for he concludes: "I have discussed the prospects of the case throughout on the view that the plaintiff will take the strongest line it is possible for him to take. If some latitude is allowed by the Court in the admission of evidence there is a fair prospect of success on the most important parts of the libel. If however the Court holds Defendant to strict proof of the allegations complained of (and this is the more probable course of events) the verdict is likely to be for Plaintiff and the amount of damages will depend on the extent to which he can be discredited in cross-examination by eliciting admissions of his general anti-British sympathies and by drawing attention to the fact that he has never raised his voice honestly and openly against the outrages of the anarchists."

This background history of the case brings out clearly the true reason for Tilak's failure to win his case. If he had had any idea how far the Government was backing his opponent Tilak would probably never have carried the fight so far.

An article in the *Daily Herald* at that time sums up the whole situation admirably. The writer, "J.B." says: "For whatever may be alleged against Mr. Tilak's political crusade, nobody, not even his political antagonists, has ever ventured to question the purity of his life, his probity and his truthfulness. Such is the man who appealed to British justice. But the verdict was given in favour of the defendants. This verdict will, without doubt, be read with regret and surprise throughout India, but it was inevitable after the impassioned charge of the judge, with whom a simple judicial question between individual parties assumed a grave political aspect, as if it were an impeachment of the Government of India itself. Sir Edward Carson, on behalf of the defendants, urged that Sir Valentine could have avoided the whole litigation by an apology, but that to make an apology would be 'a disaster of the gravest kind as regards the Government of India'. What is still more remarkable is that such advocacy, instead of being reprehended, was virtually accepted by the judge who declared that he had 'never tried a more serious case, having regard to its possible public consequences'."

Sir John Simon, on behalf of the plaintiff, contended that there was no evidence to go to the jury on the libels complained of by Tilak, more especially as regards blackmailing and want of common honesty. But the jury was manifestly influenced by the judge's observation that the character of the plaintiff "was not above reproach" in view of his two previous convictions for sedition. The judge thereby confused personal with political character, for a conviction for sedition clearly does not affect the personal character of the offender as a man of honour and common honesty. The judge's remark had its expected effect, and in spite of the warning of Sir John Simon that neither a British jury nor a British judge nor a British advocate is concerned with the political opinions of the parties in the case, the jury returned a verdict for the defendant.

Laymen blissfully believe that it is the duty of the judge to administer the law and dispense justice without regard to its consequences, and that it is for the Appeal Court to decide whether the importation of reasons of state into a court of justice amounts to misdirection, sufficient to vitiate the verdict of the jury in the eyes of the law. Tilak's case shows that, whatever the theory, it does not always work out so in practice.

27

A YEAR IN ENGLAND

I. THE PRESENTATION OF INDIA'S CASE

His failure in the libel case meant a colossal financial loss to Tilak who could never be described as more than a man of moderate means. Before the case came on, he had pawned nearly all he owned to raise the money to pay for his British solicitors and counsel. But with the jury's verdict going against him he now had to pay the costs of Chirol's defence also. "What irony of fate! Sir Edward Carson who acted, figuratively speaking, as the hangman in this case was to be paid from the pockets of his victim," was the apt comment of a Benares newspaper.

His friends and family were naturally anxious about his health. They were afraid that the adverse verdict and the financial worry it brought with it would depress him and affect him adversely. But he took it all with great calm and courage. He wrote instructing his nephew and manager, Dhondopant Vidwans, to sell Government securities and other liquid assets to raise the necessary funds. Of the verdict itself, Tilak writes on April 3rd and April 10th, 1919: "Do not worry about me; the adverse verdict has had no effect on my health. I have gone through worse calamities than this one. I would never have been alive today if I had succumbed to them. I will get over this as I did the others. Tell all my people that the verdict of the Court has not affected my health or my work in the least. As a matter of fact, I am waiting for the Home Rule League deputation to come (to pursue the Indian propaganda work). . . . Please send me twelve copies of my essay on Chaldean people and the Vedas. You will find them in my study."

Thus, in less than seven weeks after this crushing blow Tilak had already turned his attention to research in his favourite subjects —the antiquity of the Vedas and the Home Rule propaganda.

During his stay in London he visited the British Museum and the India Office Library to consult old Egyptian and Indian records, attended meetings of the Royal Asiatic Society and exchanged ideas with English scholars at Oxford and Cambridge interested in Vedic research. He also gave regular lessons in Hindu religion and culture to people who went to him for guidance.

By an odd—but perhaps lucky—coincidence Tilak thus chanced to be in England immediately after the end of the first World War. It was a revolutionary period in more senses than one. The Russian revolution was making a powerful impact on the working classes of Britain, the demobilization of the Army was throwing up new problems, prices had gone sky-high; the Irish troubles had assumed enormous proportions; the Labour unrest was growing; the Peace Conference was meeting in Paris. He also witnessed and took full advantage of the post-war Parliamentary election. New forces were at work everywhere; the air was filled with slogans of democracy and self-determination which gave new hope to colonial peoples all over the world. Tilak was thrilled and inspired by the atmosphere around him. But before he could start his propaganda work he would have to get the ban on public speaking lifted. Fortunately Dr. Nair of Madras who had been similarly barred by the Government of India from addressing public meetings in England, had just succeeded in getting the order rescinded after applying to the War Cabinet. Acting on this precedent Tilak's solicitors applied to the British Government and he was released from the undertaking he had given in India. At once he threw himself into the agitation for Indian Home Rule. He missed no opportunity to meet officials and explain to them the Indian point of view on the Montford Reforms which were being proposed by the British Cabinet. On behalf of the Indian Home Rule League, of which he was president, he appeared, together with G. S. Khaparde and R. P. Karandikar, before the Parliamentary Joint Select Committee set up to consider the Government of India Bill prepared by Mr. Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State for India. When called upon for any observations he wanted to make to supplement the written memorandum already in the Committee's hands, Tilak spoke without hesitation, in clear though rather low tones. The Home Rule League on behalf of which he appeared, he said, "had accepted the Declaration of August 20th, 1917, in regard to His



With British Members of Parliament, Members of the British India Committee and the Members of the Indian Home Rule League, 1919

Majesty's Government's policy in India, although we put our own construction upon the latter part of the Declaration, which left the pace at which India should proceed towards responsible government to the authorities in Whitehall to determine in consultation with the Government of India". He took the view that the proposals put forward by the Secretary of State and the Viceroy were not necessarily the corollary to the pronouncement. A much larger measure of self-government could be given to Indians while preserving the spirit of the British policy as laid down in the August Declaration. In fact, even the Congress-League scheme provided for advance by stages, though the stages would be fewer than under the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme. He also pressed the necessity of a definite time-limit being fixed in the statute for the attainment by India of fully responsible government. The term of fifteen years fixed by the Congress, he thought, was reasonable.

He also claimed that Indians were fully capable of administering the provinces, and that they should be given provincial autonomy. He declared that those matters which, it was considered, could be transferred to popular control in the provinces, should also be placed under responsible Ministers in the Central Government. This could be done without resorting to diarchy. The Congress and the League had suggested a scheme for that purpose, and had provided sufficient safeguards. Forestalling the objection of some British critics over the Indians' ability to understand and vote on the issues involved, Tilak assured the Committee that material for creating an effective electorate already existed in India. Above all, he wished to see the initiative for inaugurating broad policies taken out of the hands of the officials, who should have only the status and functions of permanent civil servants in Britain. He stated emphatically that "such initiative should only be exercised by the people's representatives". Lastly, he considered it was absolutely necessary to include a Declaration of Rights in the Statute.

Tilak finished his remarks and sat down, expecting that the members would now, as they had done with other witnesses, ask him questions to get further light on many points of difference between the proposed Bill and his oral and written statements. Not only Tilak and his friends but many British sympathizers who crowded the Committee room were fully expecting a lively exchange of views

between the Indian leader and the members of the Committee. But to their surprise and disappointment, the Chairman, Lord Selborne, announced that the Committee had decided "not to trouble Mr. Tilak by putting questions to him". The members of the Home Rule League deputation were as astonished as the audience to see this unexpected solicitude for the witness. But was it really solicitude, or was it not, rather, prejudice against the Indian leader? The late Mr. Ben Spoor, M.P., who was a member of the Select Committee, later gave the answer to this question when he told Mr. N. C. Kelkar that it was all pre-arranged. He said that as soon as the question of Tilak's acceptance as a witness came up for discussion, Lord Sydenham, the ex-Governor of Bombay—who considered Tilak the arch-enemy of British rule in India—opposed the idea. He argued that among all the witnesses who had already appeared or who were yet to give evidence there could be none so violently anti-British and seditious as Tilak and therefore he should not be accepted as a witness. With the result of the Chirol case still fresh in their minds, the majority of the Committee agreed with him. But Mr. Montagu, the author of the Bill, and Mr. Ben Spoor himself, the only Labour member on the Committee, pointed out that "it would be both discourteous and impolitic not to accept Tilak as a witness—after all he is the biggest leader from India, whether we like him or not." Lord Selborne suggested that Tilak should be allowed to have his say, but that the Committee should refrain from cross-examining him and thus show their disapproval of him. This was agreed to.

Another incident which occurred at a social party given by the Britain and India Society in honour of Tilak and his colleagues, also shows how bitter was this feeling against Tilak. The party was attended by a large gathering of distinguished men and women, Members of Parliament, Cabinet Ministers and others. Among them was Lord Shaw, who had sat on the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council which decided the Tai Maharaj case, on appeal, in favour of Tilak. When the guest of honour was introduced to his lordship he took both Tilak's hands in his and shook them cordially, saying with genuine pleasure, "Oh! Is this Mr. Tilak, the great man of India?" But Lady Sydenham, who was standing near, turned to one of the ladies who had organized the party and angrily shouted, "How dare you honour this man! What impropriety! Don't you know Tilak is a sedition-monger? My husband put him on trial and

sent him to six years of transportation. And you have the impertinence to invite him and us for this party. I consider it a deliberate insult and affront to us."[1] The dignity of her ladyship was so ruffled that she could not even wait for her husband to leave with her.

One of the major problems Tilak had to tackle during his stay in England was the reorganization of the British India Committee and the weekly newspaper *India*, the nominal organ of the Indian National Congress. Nominal, because the policy of the paper under its editor, Mr. Henry S. L. Polak, had long ceased to be that of the Congress. Since 1893 the British Committee had been receiving Rs.60,000 a year subsidy from the Congress in India; in lean years this sum had to be cut to Rs.30,000. But in any case the British Committee received every year some £2,000 to £3,000 according to what the Congress purse could afford. The editor of *India* was a paid official and was supposed to work under the guidance and supervision of the directors of the paper, who were the executive council of the British Committee. So long as the Moderate Party was in charge of Congress there was no occasion for differences of opinion over either the Committee's method of working or the policy of the newspaper. The Moderate leaders who went to London were generally men of pliable temperament who willingly put themselves in the hands of the British Committee. Under the influence of Mr. Polak, however, the Committee developed a superior and self-important attitude and argued that Tilak and the members of the Congress deputation, "ignorant as they were of the local situation", should, in deciding their attitude in England to the Reform Bill, let themselves be guided by the experienced men of the Committee. Mr. Polak had already committed them in *India* to supporting the India Bill—and incidentally criticized the Congress for calling the Parliamentary declaration unsatisfactory and inadequate. The position of the editor of *India* was identical with that of Moderate leaders like Sir Surendranath Bannerjee and Sir Dinshau Wacha, who were pained and alarmed to see that the Congress, under the influence of Tilak, was not recognizing "the profound change in the spirit and the policy of the Government" and was "persisting in a campaign of opposition". Mr. Polak and the Moderate leaders were genuinely afraid that if they

[1] *Life of Lokamanya Tilak*, by N. C. Kelkar.

did not strengthen Mr. Montagu's hand by their support the reactionary opposition led by Sydenhamites would prove too strong for him and they might lose "this God-given opportunity which may not recur for a long time".

Tilak was willing to listen to the advice of the Committee and give it all the weight it deserved; but he could not agree that he and the Congress deputation should follow the British India Committee's advice without question. He did not believe that the deputation should refrain from demanding more than Mr. Montagu was offering India in his Bill. He rejected the plea that, by demanding more, India would lose what was already being offered to her. He pointed out to Dr. Clarke and Dr. Rutherford, who were managing the Committee, that Mr. Polak's blind support for Mr. Montagu and his Bill was contrary to the decisions of the Congress in Delhi. He also expressed his surprise and disgust at the shabby way *India* had treated the resolutions of the Special Congress held in Bombay. These resolutions on the Montagu-Chelmsford Report were of great importance, embodying as they did the considered view of the people of India, yet Mr. Polak had not even published them in *India*. For six weeks the discussions went on, and at last Dr. Clarke, Dr. Rutherford and Mr. Parikh, the three key men in the Committee, were convinced of the reasonableness of Tilak's proposal to amend the constitution of the Committee and to make *India* the mouthpiece of the Indian Congress in London.

But still Mr. Polak refused to accept any change. By 1918 when the Delhi Congress met, the Moderates had to all intents and purposes left the Congress; yet in the columns of *India* he had the temerity to support them and oppose the Congress policy. Mr. N. C. Kelkar, who took part in the many discussions which finally led to the reorganization of the Committee and the newspaper *India* writes, "Dr. Clarke appreciated the position of the Congress deputation and of Tilak (who was the president-elect of the Delhi Congress), who were charged by the Indian Congress with a specific mandate, by which they were in duty bound to carry out propaganda in England. He therefore offered his full co-operation and placed the office and library of the British Committee at the disposal of the deputation. The services of Miss Helena Normanton, the well-known woman barrister, who was working as assistant editor, were also lent to the deputation. But Mr. Polak proved a hard nut to

crack, for he assumed an air of self-important omniscience which almost bordered on impudence and defiance. It is surprising how such a self-respecting and intelligent man could defend the position he took, that although he was a paid servant of the Congress, he was free to write in *India* against the Congress." When his opposition became unreasonable the Committee decided to replace him by a new editor. At this point reason dawned on Mr. Polak and he tendered his resignation. Miss Normanton now became the editor of *India* and Mr. Kelkar her associate. Having thus put in order the affairs of the newspaper and the British Committee, Tilak turned his attention to the work of organizing Indian propaganda on a wider scale. In this task he received valuable aid from Mr. George Lansbury and his Parliamentary Labour Party.

II. LABOUR'S SUPPORT

Tilak's work in England was the first serious attempt on the part of India to enlighten the British people about Indian affairs and make them realize that the administration in India was carried on in their name, and that therefore they were responsible for the poverty, disease and illiteracy of the country. Before Tilak, men like Dadabhai Naoroji (the first Indian to be elected a Member of Parliament) had tried to prove by statistics the poverty of the Indian people. Mr. G. K. Gokhale and Surendranath Bannerjee had also visited England and addressed a few meetings, which were little more than "drawing-room" affairs, for they believed in "high-up contacts" and official circles. But none of them had the vision and foresight to realize that these "influential circles" would never be set moving by Indian appeals and petitions. They could be made to move only if the British electorate, the real source of power in Britain, was roused to action. Most of the Moderate leaders—G. K. Gokhale, Wacha, Bannerjee, Mudholkar—who went to England for political work confined their activities to the Liberal politicians. Not only did they fail to contact the Labour Party leaders but they scrupulously avoided having any association with men like Hyndman and Keir Hardie, whom they regarded as "wild men" and "Bolsheviks".

Tilak was perhaps the first leader from India to judge the situation correctly and approach the British people through their own organizations and newspapers. Since the working classes formed the

majority of the population, Tilak established contact with Labour leaders and their organizations. Writing about the difference in tactics between Tilak's and other deputations which had come to London, Miss Betty Hall, organizer and Whip of the London Labour Party in 1919, says, "Tilak's task in England was not an easy one. Other Indian delegates, representing different views, were busy with high British officials and at the India Office, but not Mr. Tilak. He spent the greater part of his time spreading India's demands amongst the British people". He was to be seen at the British Labour Party Conferences, at the Trades Union Congress and at all sorts of meetings attended by workers. Even before he came to London the conviction was growing on him that the Liberal and Conservative Parties were becoming political anachronisms and that the coming political party in England was the Labour Party. He also knew that men like George Lansbury, Arthur Henderson, Colonel Josiah Wedgwood and Ramsay MacDonald were men of faith who had themselves suffered and sacrificed in the cause of socialism and pacifism. For their part, they appreciated Tilak's qualities of head and heart and especially his single-minded devotion to the cause of India's emancipation. Presiding over a Glasgow Labour meeting where Tilak was speaking, Ramsay MacDonald said, "Believe me when I say that Mr. Tilak (who is fortunately with us tonight) is the very embodiment of all the grievances and hardships under which the people of India are suffering and the very embodiment of the spirit of resistance which is manifest in India today. He has personally come here to request you to support and help the Indian people's struggle for political independence. I assure him on your behalf that the Independent Labour Party will give him and his people the support and help he is asking for. We Socialists do not believe in the narrow concept of nationalism. Our ideal is the brotherhood of man. We will work always for the establishment of democratic institutions based on justice and peoples' will, everywhere in the world."

George Lansbury, "the saint of Socialism", was most impressed by Tilak's "transparent sincerity. . . . He was one of the most clear-headed and straightforward of counsellors and friends".

Winning over Lansbury was a great step forward in making India's case known all over England, especially at the time of the General Election of 1918—immediately after the end of the war

against Germany. Tilak subscribed to the funds of the Labour Party and gave a cheque for £2,000 to help turn the weekly *Herald* into a daily newspaper. Arthur Henderson, who was then the treasurer of the Labour Party, wrote to Tilak (December 6th, 1918): "Please find herewith receipt for £2,000, which you sent us the other day. Indeed it is a generous donation for which the Labour Party is most grateful to you. I need hardly tell you that we are in complete sympathy with the aspirations of the Indian people to attain Swaraj. I assure you that our Party will do everything in its power to help you and the cause of Indian democracy."

Not only did the *Herald* newspaper strongly support the Indian demand for Home Rule and publish several articles by Tilak, but the Labour movement all over the country placed its platform at the disposal of him and his colleagues. N. C. Kelkar, Joseph Baptista, G. S. Khaparde, V. J. Patel, R. P. Karandikar, Bipin Chandra Pal and Satya Murthi, the principal delegates of the Home Rule League and Congress deputations, addressed mass meetings of workers from Glasgow and Edinburgh in the north to Plymouth and Southampton in the south.

Although Tilak's first concern on his arrival in London was to make all the necessary arrangements for the libel suit, he did not for one moment neglect the equally important object of putting India on the map. He established his Home Rule League headquarters in Adelphi Terrace, and books, pamphlets and manifestoes dealing with the India Bill and the demand for Home Rule began to pour out. When the first post-war General Election was held, he wrote a special pamphlet explaining the Indian case in simple language and distributed a million copies of it throughout Great Britain and Ireland. Early in February Tilak published another pamphlet demanding self-determination for India and distributed it throughout England and the Continent with the special intention of reaching public men holding important and influential positions—ministers, diplomats, journalists, publicists and so forth. In this pamphlet Tilak insisted upon India's right to immediate Home Rule. "It was much the most ambitious pamphlet," said the Government of India report, "so far issued by the London branch of the Indian Home Rule League." *Self-determination for India* contained two full-page cartoons and ten pages of reading material. For once the Government of India's observers have nothing sinister to say about Tilak's

publication, for they remark, "The pamphlet is confined to a discussion of the constitutional principles applicable to the case of India, and though its conclusions are extreme, its language is moderate and it does not indulge in the indiscriminate abuse of the British administration which disfigures so much of Indian political agitation". The pamphlet advocated a federation of national states to form the united states of India. Both the provincial and the central governments were to be responsible and democratic and the whole was to be completely self-governing and to have equal status with the other members of the British Commonwealth. A time-limit of fifteen years was proposed for the introduction, in stages, of this form of government.

The pamphlet brought Tilak many appreciative letters. Mr. Hyndman, the editor of *Justice*, wrote: "I am entirely in agreement with you that India must have the right to determine her political future. Why shouldn't she enjoy that right if other nations can? I went carefully through the pamphlet, which, in my view, presents the Indian case admirably." Miss Josephine Ransome of the Britain and India Society said, "Your pamphlet on *Self-determination for India* is an admirable production—I like both the argument and arrangement. Indeed it is a telling document. We propose to distribute two hundred copies."

On February 25th, four days after he had lost his libel suit against Chirol, Tilak addressed a public meeting, in the Caxton Hall. His self-control was such that it was impossible to tell that he had just suffered a grievous blow—a fact which was commented on by the Chairman of the meeting.

In his speech Tilak observed: "The time has now come for India to enjoy the benefits of freedom and liberty. The Allies are enunciating throughout the world the principles of self-determination and democracy. I say, let Great Britain make a start in its own Empire. I am called anti-British and seditionist, which is quite untrue—I am opposed to tyranny and oppression, but I am not hostile to Britain and the British people. I will go one step further and say that I am as staunch a Britisher as anyone here—in some respects a much better Britisher—as I am putting into practice the teachings of British democracy and freedom. I am on the side of idealism—the idealism that is being put forward as the ideals of the British nation. But I admit I am up against all forms of tyranny anywhere in the

world, and I hope that all right-minded Britons and the British democracy will listen to my appeal and help me to achieve the emancipation and liberation of my country."

Among other people whom Tilak met in London at this time were Bernard Shaw and Sydney Webb, several of whose Fabian Society meetings he addressed, and the journalist and writer Edgar Wallace, who was attracted by Tilak's research into the antiquity of the Vedas.

Wallace offered to help Tilak and did valuable work in London and Paris. He was particularly anxious that the British people should know Tilak as he was and not as his enemies painted him—the *enfant terrible* of Indian politics. As soon as the Chirol case ended, a campaign of vilification was started against Tilak, led by the *Morning Post* and Lord Sydenham. Wallace, in an attempt to counter this campaign, went round interviewing a number of newspaper editors in order to present his own view of Tilak, but after six weeks of intensive work he had to admit defeat. He wrote to Tilak (April 2nd, 1919): "It is a matter for shame and regret that no one gives in the newspapers a true picture of you; most of what has appeared is so one-sided and prejudiced. Some of the articles are written by your avowed enemies who hate you and your party, but even they betray colossal ignorance. If a writer were to present a true and objective picture of you he would have to say, 'Mr. Tilak is a highly cultured gentleman and he is a convinced opponent of Bolshevism. When chaos is spreading all over the world he has kept his head and is fighting the battles of his country by purely constitutional methods'. I find it difficult to hold an ordinary conversation with any retired Anglo-Indian. As soon as I mention that your Swaraj scheme is confined to the type of political autonomy prevailing in the self-governing colonies, with the subjects of defence and foreign affairs reserved by the Imperial Government, incredulity and indignation make him mad and he begins to foam at the mouth. I dare not argue further to convince him as it would bring on a spasm of apoplexy. In short, a great need exists to put before the public the true facts about you and your demand for Swaraj, but we are seriously handicapped for want of means."

While he was in England, the Delhi Congress of December 1918 elected Tilak, Gandhi and Hasan Imam as delegates to present the Indian case at the Peace Conference. This would open up a new field, and would give Tilak the opportunity to put India's case

before the nations of the world gathered in council. He immediately applied for a passport to go to Paris, but the India Office refused to recognize the Congress deputation. Tilak then renewed his application, this time as a journalist, claiming passport facilities to watch and report on the Conference. The request was also refused, without any reason being given.

Tilak was determined, however, to make India's voice heard in the Peace Conference, so he sent Edgar Wallace to Paris to interview M. Georges Clemenceau and President Wilson. By his hand he sent a memorandum to the President of the Peace Conference on behalf of the Indian National Congress. In it he explained the limitations and drawbacks of the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme and urged: "I have dwelt upon official and popular proposals not for comparing their merits, but for the purpose of pointing out that the Government do not realize that the most indispensable and fundamental reform is Liberty—Liberty for the people to work out their own salvation and fashion their own forms of government on assured democratic basis. The prolonged period of probation and ten-yearly inquisition are intolerable in modern civilization. What is wanted is power for the people in the Central Government. With this power the people would be in a position to decide under the principle of self-determination how many provinces there should be, what should be their boundaries, what measures would prove efficient and sufficient as the first step, what speed would be safe for advancing towards full autonomy and responsible self-government without foreign control in internal affairs and without periodical examinations into their capacity." The memorandum also agreed to certain limitations the people of India would be willing to submit to "for a brief period in order to assure the British Government of their bona fides, in the hope that within fifteen years they would be placed on a status of political equality with the Oversea-Dominions in all respects.

"Under the circumstances, in discharge of the duty devolving upon me as the elected representative of all British India under the above resolution of the Congress, I earnestly appeal to the Peace Conference firstly, to concede to India the same right of representation on the League of Nations that is accorded to the British Dominions, and secondly, to declare that Indians are quite capable of governing themselves, that as a progressive nation they are entitled to the application of the principle of self-determination, and that in

the exercise of the principle they are also entitled to determine the form of Government, founded upon accepted democratic lines, which they deem most suitable for self-development according to the genius of the people. The immortal principles of justice and the rule of right against might justify such a declaration. I beg to assure the Conference through you, Sir, as its President, that such a declaration will not only excite the warmest enthusiasm and the deepest gratitude throughout India, with its 315 millions of people, but that its enforcement would ensure the peace of the world and the prosperity of India."

III. LIFE IN LONDON

On his arrival in London Tilak went to live at No. 10 Howley Place, Maida Vale, a house rented for him by Joseph Baptista and Sitaram Seth of Manchester. Soon, among the Indian population of London No. 10 Howley Place became known as "No. 10 Indian Downing Street". Here Tilak and his party were looked after by a Mr. and Mrs. McNalty and their daughter Sheila. This family came from Ireland and took a lively interest in politics. The fact that their own country was engaged in a bitter struggle with the British Government no doubt gave zest to their service of Tilak and his friends.

Mrs. McNalty had learned to cook curry and rice in Manchester and so the members of Tilak's party when they arrived in London were able to enjoy their usual dishes right from the first day.[1] Owing to his diabetes, Tilak, of course, had to have specially-prepared food —barley bread fried in butter and some leaf vegetables. The party stayed in Howley Place for about ten months before they moved to a larger house, 60 Talbot Road, Bayswater, placed at Tilak's disposal

[1] By the time Tilak returned to India in November the McNalty family had learned enough about Indian food and Indian cooking to be able to open an Indian restaurant. Mr. Parikh, an old Indian resident who recently died in London, used to tell a story about this restaurant, which displayed the sign: UNDER THE BLESSINGS OF LOKAMANYA TILAK, "FATHER OF INDIAN UNREST". One day, Sir Valentine Chirol, who had acquired a taste for hot Indian dishes, went to McNalty's Restaurant and was surprised to read the sign so prominently displayed. He asked to see the proprietor, but he was out; so he asked the head waiter to take down the sign. This he refused to do. It was, of course, Chirol himself who, in his book, had called Tilak "The father of Indian unrest". But he had used it in a derogatory sense. What he objected to now was seeing it used as a commendation of Tilak.

by its wealthy owner, Mr. Deepchand Zaveri, a diamond merchant from Surat with extensive business in London and Paris.

Tilak and his friends lived very simple and frugal lives. A man of abstemious habits and a strict vegetarian, Tilak did not find life in England too difficult or even very different from his Indian way of life. He made little change in his daily routine and habits, except perhaps in his dress. In Poona he wore a dhoti and a toga-like shirt, but those garments were obviously unsuitable in the cold climate of London. He therefore wore trousers and thick socks and shoes, and a long coat, buttoned high. He disliked neckties and could conveniently discard them with this kind of coat. Many people mistakenly supposed that he did not wear a tie because he was a priest or in clerical orders.

As far as possible Tilak avoided evening or night engagements. He would leave home about midday, after lunch, and return by about five o'clock in the evening. He would then receive visitors and friends and hold political, social or religious discussions with them. He usually retired early.

N. C. Kelkar, who lived with Tilak for six months and kept him constant company writes: "Tilak's stay in London was unique in many ways. He lived there for nearly thirteen months but hardly ever went to the picture galleries, the Zoo, or the many famous buildings or monuments of which London is justly proud: the only exceptions he made to this were the British Museum, the India Office library, and the House of Commons. Indeed he was perhaps a very rare specimen of traveller, for he did not 'do' London from the tourist point of view."

As was to be expected, Scotland Yard kept a sharp eye on Tilak and his entourage but, says Mr. G. M. Namjoshi, who accompanied him, "the C.I.D. officers in England never made their presence felt". Some of the C.I.D. reports sent to the Government of India and now made available suggest that two or three high-ranking officers were sent to London from India, on special duty, to follow Tilak and keep a close record of his day-to-day activities.

The political reporting of Tilak's activities in the secret file is usually wide of the mark. The C.I.D. officers always seemed to see anti-British and sinister motives in whatever he did or said, either in public or in private conversation. Here, for instance, is a report about the opening of the Home Rule League offices in Adelphi

Terrace, off the Strand. The C.I.D. report suggests that the true significance of this "appears to be the establishment of a centre for the student element in Great Britain—a place at which the younger men can be trained and educated in politics of the extremer form. . . . The students will be of the greatest possible use in furthering and carrying into effect the emancipation of India from the British yoke —consequently, they must be guided and developed along the right lines.

"So far as has been gathered, the general idea of the scheme is to wait patiently for another ten years before the final attempt to overthrow the British domination and meanwhile to work for and develop with every possible thought and care a plan which must succeed. That it must succeed Mr. Tilak is convinced for a variety of reasons.

"Hitherto, in his opinion, there has not been a great amount of what may be called 'outside' sympathy for the cause of India. This has been changed by the war and the feeling created can, he considers, become a powerful factor for India's freedom if skilfully worked upon and manipulated. There is first the certain sympathy of Germany and her late Allies for anything anti-British. Then there are China and Japan, which ought not to present much difficulty. Then, again, the feeling of the Mohammedan countries, Turkey and her dependencies, Egypt and Persia, can be taken into account. To further this, the Mohammedans in India would be conciliated. Again, much could be hoped for from widespread pan-Hindu-Buddhist propaganda, initiated through the influence of the Bengal school of thought of Sir Rabindranath Tagore and his followers. The nationalist element in Ceylon, too, could be reached through this means.

"On the question of propaganda in India herself, Mr. Tilak does not feel that the need is so great now as in the past. In his view, all the returning Labour battalions, the sepoys, the frontier tribes which have been fighting in England's employ, the Imperial Service troops, the prisoners from Germany, etc., from whatever front they come will all *ipso facto* become and constitute themselves organs of propaganda; in each of their native provinces, districts, towns and villages their influence will be felt and their work will be done. This will count enormously with the rural population of their native places.

"Mr. Tilak relies, too, on the depletion of England's finances, and the fact that through the losses of other nations there is none that can come to her assistance in the future. The losses in skilled labour through casualties, the destruction of her shipping, the competition of Japan and America, the complications of foreign policy for many years to come—all these are factors which will result in the loss of England's power and prestige.

"Such are the opportunities to be watched for and seized by India. The fortune of war has come to her, and she must succeed."

This report concludes: "Mr. Tilak, in spite of his years and somewhat indifferent health is mentally vigorous and alert."

There are many other reports written in a similar vein and sent out to India. Most of them were mere gossip or unfounded speculation, by which the writers hoped to please their superiors. But, after all, the facts about Tilak's stay in England were easy enough to find out. His house was open to anybody at any time of the day. English and Indian friends went to see him without having to make an appointment; he made no secret of his views and willingly discussed them with anybody who cared to go and see him. Many a time Mr. Kelkar or Namjoshi would try to dissuade Tilak from expressing his views too frankly and openly. But his argument was: "You must not forget that discussion is not action. If a subject is introduced for theoretical discussion I am bound to say what I think about it. Then again, I do not believe in secrecy. I want the English people to know what is in my mind. Let Scotland Yard make their reports —I do not mind so long as those reports are truthful and convey my ideas and not a distorted version of their own."

Tilak's stay in England was described by Joseph Baptista as "one mad rush", with most of his time taken up in addressing meetings, attending social functions and holding political discussions with Indian and British friends. But in May 1919 he slipped in the doorway of his house and sprained his ankle. As a result, for three or four weeks he could hardly stand up, let alone walk. This accident threatened to put an end to his public work in England for some time. But Tilak, unwilling to disappoint the many organizations which had booked dates for him to address them, suggested that he should write his speeches which could then be read to the audience. To this proposal a secretary of one of the organizations wrote, "I feel terribly distressed at your mishap and wish you a speedy

recovery. But having your speech read is not the same thing as appearing in person on the platform. Our members will be most disappointed. However, may I suggest that we carry you to the car and drive you to the meeting? You can, of course, address the meeting seated." From then on, Tilak addressed scores of meetings in this fashion.

His sprained ankle was exploited in India to spread a malicious rumour. The *Englishman* of Calcutta published the story that Tilak was dangerously ill with cerebral haemorrhage at Broadstairs. Telegrams and messages came from all quarters of India inquiring about his health. He was most surprised at this wicked rumour and wrote to his nephew in Poona, "Do not believe a word about my health. The leg is still a little swollen but that does not prevent me from fulfilling my public engagements. Namjoshi gives me a pick-a-back and puts me in a taxi and we go to the meeting, which I address seated in a chair. Tell all my friends that my injured ankle has not affected my powers of speech". He once said to George Lansbury, "I never like to cancel a public engagement. By not fulfilling it you disappoint not one or two individuals but a host of men and women. Whatever be his personal difficulties, a public man has no right to trifle with the time and convenience of so many people".

Tilak devoted himself so whole-heartedly to his campaign that he never had a day off in his thirteen months' stay in England. In that time he had succeeded in reorganizing the British India Committee and putting it on a proper constitutional basis, and regaining control of the newspaper *India* for the Congress, as well as making a firm contact with the Labour Party. But by the end of August 1919, he began to get ready to return home. At one time he had planned to go to America and join his friend Lajpat Rai who, with the help of Dr. Hardikar, was conducting a weekly paper *Young India*. But the journey was out of the question—a Government which would not give him a passport to go to Paris was hardly likely to let him travel to America!

Then again, Tilak could see that the Joint Parliamentary Committee had nearly finished its work. This meant that the Government of India Bill would probably soon become law. He would therefore need to be back in India to prepare for the elections which would be held. He was also anxious to meet the people of the

Punjab, where the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy had recently taken place.[1] He had taken a prominent part in many meetings held in London to condemn General Dyer and the political high-handedness of Sir Michael O'Dwyer. But that was not enough. He wanted to be with the people by attending that year's Congress, which was to be held at Amritsar, the scene of the tragedy. He therefore decided to sail home by S.S. *Egypt* and left England on October 30th, reaching Bombay on November 27th, 1919.

In thirteen months Tilak had accomplished a great deal. In particular, he established such a firm relationship with the Labour Party that from then on India became one of the major planks in the Party's programme. It was the friendship and understanding built up by Tilak in 1918–19 that finally led to a Labour Govern-

[1] The Jallianwala Bagh tragedy occurred under the martial law administration in the Punjab in April 1919. As everywhere else in India, a public meeting was held in the Jallianwala Bagh of Amritsar on April 13th, to protest against the Rowlatt Act. The Bagh, once a garden but in modern times waste land, is mainly used for holding fairs and public meetings. In size it is no larger than Trafalgar Square and is shut in almost entirely by high walls on all sides. A narrow lane leads to the entrance which also serves as the Bagh's main exit. On April 13th soon after half-past four when the meeting had just started, General Dyer entered the place with armoured cars and troops and without giving any warning "opened fire at about 100 yards' range upon a dense crowd which was estimated by him at 6,000, by others at 10,000 and more, but practically unarmed and all quite defenceless. The panic-stricken multitude broke at once, but for ten consecutive minutes he kept up a merciless fusillade—in all 1,650 rounds—on that seething mass of humanity, caught like rats in a trap, vainly rushing for the few narrow exits or lying flat on the ground to escape the rain of bullets, which he personally directed to the points where the crowd was thickest. The 'targets' to use his own words, were good, and when at the end of those ten minutes, having almost exhausted his ammunition, he marched his men off by the way they came, he had killed, according to the official figures, only wrung out of Government months later, 379, and left about 1,200 wounded on the ground, for whom, again to use his own word, he did not consider it his 'job' to take the slightest thought". (Sir Valentine Chirol: *India Old and New*.)

Lala Girdhari Lal, Deputy Chairman of the Punjab Chamber of Commerce, was a reliable eye-witness of the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy. He watched the scene from a house overlooking the Bagh. In his evidence before the Congress Inquiry Committee he says: "I saw hundreds of persons killed on the spot. The worst part of the whole thing was that firing was directed towards the gates through which the people were running out . . . bullets actually rained over the people at all these small outlets (four or five in all) . . . Even those who lay flat on the ground were shot. No arrangements were made by the authorities to look after the dead or wounded. . . . I gave water to the wounded and rendered such assistance as was possible. . . . I went round the place and saw almost everybody lying there. . . . I think there must have been over 1,000 dead bodies in the garden then."



Taken in London, when staying at 10 Howley Place, Maida Vale, 1918–1919

ment under Mr. Attlee granting complete independence to India in 1947.

Tilak with his usual political acumen had seen where power was to lie. The Moderates and the others who had visited England before him had been content to try to influence official circles, and had achieved nothing. It was left to Tilak to discover in the Labour Party the real source of future political power.

28

RESPONSIVE CO-OPERATION

As soon as the news of the British verdict reached India Tilak's countrymen decided to collect the necessary funds to defray the enormous cost of the libel suit and prove to the world their faith and confidence in him. They knew that Tilak's character was not in need of whitewashing by a court of law in England. "You do not purify the sacrificial fire or the sacred waters of the Ganges," said the poet Rabindranath Tagore when he heard the result of the Chirol case. Early in March the *Kesari* published an appeal which said: "The adverse decision in the libel case means that Tilak will face financial ruin. He has already spent about Rs.200,000 to which will have to be added Chirol's costs. We reckon the total will be not less than Rs.300,000. On the face of it the suit was a private one, but with the Government of India stepping in it assumed a public character which Tilak never anticipated. We consider it proper therefore that the nation should come forward to relieve him of the financial burden which the suit has so cruelly imposed on him." On May 30th, a public meeting was held in Bombay over which Mahatma Gandhi presided. In a handsome tribute to Tilak's "matchless sacrifices for the Motherland and his profound scholarship" Gandhi said, "My ways and methods are different from those of Lokamanya Tilak, but I must pay my homage to the selfless service he has rendered to the country. It would be a mistake to suppose that the people's respect and love for him could diminish because the decision of the British court went against him. As a matter of fact he has risen higher than ever in their esteem because of the adverse verdict. The fact is that the longest purse has won. One must admire the Lokamanya's tenacity and courage. Undaunted by the legal defeat he is carrying on his national work in England. When he is engaged in fighting our battles over there, it

is our duty here to collect funds and relieve him of the financial worry." By the time Tilak returned home on November 27th, the Tilak Purse Fund had reached the very respectable amount of Rs.300,000. That in itself was an answer to the British jury and Sir Edward Carson who had so offensively said that there was not a coin in the world to assess the damage to the character of Tilak.

Tens of thousands gathered at the quay-side as the S.S. *Egypt* brought Tilak back to Bombay. It was a spontaneous reception in which the Moslems and Christians vied with their Hindu compatriots in welcoming home the great leader. The *Bombay Chronicle* wrote, "Who cares what the British jury and judge said about our beloved Lokamanya? The joyful and spontaneous welcome he received on his landing should convince even the meanest intelligence of the bureaucracy that judicial pronouncements are powerless to dethrone the Lokamanya from the loving hearts of the people." The same evening a purse was presented, together with an address. Another tumultuous reception and an address from the citizens of Poona, Tilak's home town, were waiting for him when he arrived there two days later. The people felt particularly happy at the thought that Tilak had returned home safe and sound. When he undertook the journey the war was still going on and the danger of German submarines in the Atlantic very real. Then again, they were apprehensive whether Tilak with his indifferent health would be able to stand the cold weather in England. But he had survived both the journey and the English climate, which gave them an occasion for celebration and rejoicing.

Immediately on his return Tilak had to go south to Madras before he could travel to Amritsar in the north to attend the Congress session. The Madras visit was notable for the address he received from the non-Brahmin party of the Province. Its importance lay in the fact that this party was created in 1917, thanks to the inspiration and support of Government officials, as a rival body to Tilak's Indian Home Rule League. Its tactics were, as they were meant to be, purely disruptive. Its very name was significant—its only object was to oppose the Brahmins who, according to the British officials of the day, were the chief enemies of British rule. The authorities were not a little surprised to see that their own creation had succumbed to the wave of national solidarity Tilak had inspired all over the country. The address is, in its way, a measure of the degree to which national

feeling had grown in the forty years since Tilak began to preach his gospel of aggressive nationalism which was opposed, as we have seen, first by the so-called Moderates and the Mohammedans and later by the non-Brahmins. This opposition took on a bitter form, especially in the two great presidencies of Bombay and Madras, where it looked as though the anti-national forces under the powerful leadership of the Maharajah of Kolhapur in Maharashtra and the Justice Party in Madras would succeed in disrupting the national movement and with it the unity so carefully built up by Tilak and other leaders at the Lucknow Congress of 1916. When they presented Tilak with their address the non-Brahmins of Madras not only threw off the patronage of the British Government but they also declared their faith in the movement of national unity. "The future generations," ran the address, "will agree with our considered opinion that no one among the many patriots and national leaders who have worked for the emancipation of our Motherland can approach the labours and sacrifices of Lokamanya Tilak. We realize that much more will have to be done before the complete emancipation of India is achieved, and we deplore the many fissiparous tendencies, such as the growing communal rivalries and political factions, which come in the way of our country's liberation. But we have complete faith in your political acumen and generous approach to all these problems, which will reach a satisfactory solution under your inspiring guidance and selfless leadership."

By the time Tilak went to Amritsar news reached India that the Indian Reform Bill had been passed in Parliament. At Bina Junction on his way to Amritsar Tilak was shown a copy of the Royal Proclamation which was issued from London and amnestied many thousands of prisoners sentenced under the régime of martial law in the Punjab, as well as appealing to the people of India to co-operate in working the new reforms. Immediately Tilak sent a message to the King to express the "grateful and loyal thanks of the Indian Home Rule League and the people of India for the amnesty" and to "assure him of responsive co-operation".

Tilak had no idea that his telegram would give rise to a storm of controversy in the country and the Congress. But even before he reached Amritsar, Anglo-Indian newspapers, always on the look-out to make mischief against him, had come out with comments on his telegram suggesting that Tilak was "out to wreck the liberal reforms

the British Parliament had conferred on India, accompanied by His Majesty's gracious Proclamation for a generous amnesty for the martial law prisoners". What they most objected to in the telegram was the adjective "responsive" to qualify the offer of co-operation. They picked on it as if it expressed some sinister and subversive doctrine.

The Moderates, who were smarting at having lost control of the Congress since the emergence of Tilak, took up the Anglo-Indian cry against him and questioned the propriety of "sending such a telegram to His Majesty". It was surprising that the critics completely forgot (or pretended to forget) that Tilak had proclaimed from a hundred platforms that his advice to the Indian people was "to accept whatever is offered in the Reform Bill but to continue to agitate for more". He had made no secret of his view that to remain content with the small change of reforms without carrying on agitation for complete Swaraj would be to stultify the aspirations of the people. Ignoring this clear statement, the critics charged him with going back on his promise of co-operation.

Unfortunately, Mahatma Gandhi also seemed to agree with Tilak's critics and advised the Congress to give its unqualified support to the new reforms. This was one of those phases in the life of Gandhiji when he became sentimental and offered unconditional co-operation to the Government. He believed that the King's Proclamation was made at a psychological moment and marked a new phase in the history of India, ushering in an era of goodwill and progress in every sphere. Furthermore, he and Mrs. Besant were convinced that the reforms had been granted mainly because of the untiring efforts of Mr. Montagu, the Secretary of State. Tilak was just as appreciative as they were of Montagu's sincere efforts to get his India Bill through Parliament; but he held that the Royal Proclamation of George V was of no greater importance than other such pronouncements before it. Royal Proclamations are in the nature of diplomatic utterances, he said, necessitated by special circumstances. Nor was he prepared to regard the Proclamation as above criticism. He pointed out that it came into the same category as the King's Speech, which the King makes at the opening of a new session of Parliament. The speech is usually subjected to severe criticism in both Houses of Parliament, since it is in reality the expression of the views of the government in power. India had

therefore every right to criticize, and if necessary find fault with the contents of the Proclamation.

Explaining his idea of responsive co-operation he said, "We are prepared to co-operate; but first there must be something to co-operate over. His Majesty has asked the people and the authorities to co-operate with each other. I regard it as almost scandalous to say or to suggest that Indians will not be prepared to co-operate for the sake of India. We must not forget that loyalty to His Majesty means in India obeying the Government officials first and the people afterwards. . . . Let the authorities declare in what way they are prepared to co-operate with us and we will assure them that if they co-operate we will surely reciprocate. Co-operation is not a one-way traffic; it is mutual, what I call responsive." To emphasize his point he added that diplomacy should be met by diplomacy and the people should not rush off and commit themselves to unqualified co-operation. He urged the Congress to express its gratitude to Montagu, but not at the expense of national dignity. Here the political realist was at work, telling his compatriots that political concessions come not out of the generosity of the ruler's heart but as the result of sustained agitation by people who have made sacrifices and undergone suffering.

For the first time, in Amritsar, Tilak and Gandhi, the Lokamanya and the Mahatma, the two architects of Indian freedom, sat face to face—in the political sense—and voiced the fundamental differences in their approach to politics. Gandhi looked on the Royal Proclamation not as a political utterance but as a sincere expression of the British people's feeling of their responsibility towards the Indian people. His moral nature inspired him to believe in the obvious sincerity of Mr. Montagu who had undoubtedly toiled hard for three years to give India the first instalment of responsible government. He was therefore of the opinion that the Indian National Congress should accept the reforms and co-operate with the Government in making them work. In other words his approach to and appreciation of political events and problems was eithcal and moral rather than practical.

But—and Mahatma Gandhi little guessed this at Amritsar in December 1919—the Turkish Treaty and the publication of the Hunter Committee's report on the Punjab tragedy were to prove a shock to his moral arguments and destroy his faith once and for all

in the solemn pledges and promises of the British Government. The same Mahatma who was to advocate, in June 1920, a complete boycott of the reforms was, only six months before, opposing Tilak for even going so far as to describe them as "inadequate and unsatisfactory". In doing so he was obviously guided by his own logic which was a fine blend of moral principles and religious convictions.

Tilak's approach to politics was, no less than Gandhi's, based on moral principles, but he did not see, as Gandhi did, an almost inevitable incompatibility between ethics and the practice of politics. Gandhi thought that to call the reforms unsatisfactory and disappointing and then to help put them into operation was a contradiction in terms, a sort of hypocrisy. His argument was that anyone who was disappointed with them could not honestly co-operate with the Government officials in making them work. He appealed therefore to Tilak to solve the dilemma, "with his great experience and knowledge of the Gita, and without mental reservations towards the British rulers who were well disposed towards India".

The situation did not present Tilak with any difficulty or dilemma. He satisfied Gandhi by a quotation from the Gita which enjoins on all mortals the acceptance of the inevitable and to work, however adverse and disappointing the circumstances, with a clear sense of duty. Although it took two days for Tilak to convince Gandhi of his thesis, he succeeded. Once Gandhi was won over, Mrs. Besant, who was also campaigning for unconditional co-operation, gave up her opposition. But there was still a third group in the Congress, led by formidable leaders like C. R. Das and Bipin Chandra Pal from Bengal, which wanted to reject the reforms outright. Their slogan was, "No Thank You". They were infuriated by the events in the Punjab and wanted India to express her indignation by refusing to accept the reforms.

Tilak set to work to hammer out a formula which would be acceptable to all concerned—a difficult task indeed. However, by showing resourcefulness and a readiness to give and take he produced a resolution on reforms which was unanimously passed by the Congress. It declared that India was fit for full self-government, that the Reform Act was "inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing", that early steps should be taken to establish full self-government in India in accordance with the principle of self-determination, that "so far as may be possible they should so implement the reforms

as to secure the early establishment of full self-government". Finally, the resolution offered "thanks to the Right Honorable E. S. Montagu for his labours in connection with the reforms".

Tilak supported the resolution with a characteristic speech and made India's position clear once more. "We want now," he said, "clearly to declare, not only here but to the whole world, that we are not satisfied with the Reform Act and we will continue our agitation. We will utilize the Act to our best advantage and continue to demand more. Let the rest of the world know that this is the exact state of things."

The unanimous acceptance by the Congress of Tilak's forthright views on Reforms cleared the way for the coming elections. On his return to Poona, therefore, he began to mobilize popular forces with a view to preparing the country to exercise the franchise. He organized what he called the Congress Democratic Party and issued its manifesto early in April 1920. He wanted all the Provincial Councils to be captured by Congressmen "who would co-operate with the bureaucracy where possible but would not hesitate to offer constitutional opposition whenever it proved necessary, to secure the people's demands". The manifesto said, "The Congress Democratic Party, as its name denotes, is a party animated by feelings of unswerving loyalty to the Congress and faith in democracy. It believes in the potency of democratic doctrines for the solution of Indian problems and regards the extension of education and political franchise as two of its best weapons. It advocates the removal of all social disabilities based on caste or custom and believes in religious toleration."

The Congress Democratic Party visualized India as a federation of states in the British Commonwealth, which would advance "the cause of humanity and the brotherhood of mankind", and demanded "equal status for India with every other member of the British Commonwealth including Great Britain". It insisted upon equal citizenship for Indians throughout the Commonwealth and effective retaliation wherever it was denied. The manifesto welcomed the formation of the League of Nations as an instrument for safeguarding the peace of the world and the integrity of states and for ending the exploitation of one country by another.

On the subject of the reforms the manifesto had this to say: "This party proposes to work the Montagu Reform Act for all it is worth

in order to accelerate the grant of full responsible government, and for this purpose it will without hesitation offer co-operation or resort to constitutional opposition, whichever may be expedient and best calculated to give effect to the popular will."

It was Tilak's intention to place this manifesto before the Special Congress which was to be held in Nagpur later in the year and to make it an all-India Congress Manifesto for Congress candidates all over the country.

At this point, however, a serious difficulty arose. Gandhi had given up his advocacy of unconditional co-operation with the Government and was now declaring that "co-operation in any shape or form with this satanic government is sinful". He was driven to this conclusion by a series of events which happened with incredible rapidity.

The Muslims of India had felt uneasy ever since Turkey joined the war on the side of Germany. Assurances were, however, given to them by British statesmen that the principles of nationality and self-determination would be applied to Turkish territories at the end of the war and that there would be no interference with the institution of the Khilafat by the European powers. But when the war was over the allied countries began to talk of punishing Turkey and assigning portions of the old Turkish Empire to this or that power. The Curzon Declaration had promised the Jews a national home in Palestine; in Arabia, Hussain was to be recognized as the Sharif of the Hedjaz and the mandates for Syria and Irak were to be assigned to France and England respectively. All this talk was a source of grave anxiety to the Muslims in India, who looked upon Turkey as the one independent Muslim power and the Turkish Sultan as the only sovereign who could discharge the duties of the Khilafat, i.e. of protecting the holy places of Islam. Hakim Ajmal Khan great Muslim leader and president of the Muslim League, declared, "Temporal power is the chief factor of the Khilafat which, it is feared, will be destroyed by dismembering the Ottoman Empire. The Khilafat must not be reduced to the position of His Holiness the Pope at Rome, with his influence limited to spiritual matters only." But the feelings of Indian Muslims were ignored; Turkey was subjected to a humiliating peace and her Empire shared out among a number of countries.

Furthermore, the Privy Council judgment in the Amritsar case,

said Hakim Ajmal Khan, had dealt "a severe blow to our constitutional rights, investing the Viceroy with almost autocratic power" and showed how "the judgments even of the English tribunals are not unaffected by political considerations". The publication of the Hunter Committee's report aggravated the situation by showing that the majority of its members considered the cold-blooded murders by General Dyer and other military officers to be mere "grave errors" and "unfortunate" or "injudicious" acts. These events made a deep impression on the mind of the Mahatma and his moral nature revolted against the methods of Western diplomacy in general and the British Government in India in particular. He could no longer endure its flagrant injustices, he declared, and in order to resist it proclaimed a policy of non-co-operation with the Government, to be carried out in all walks of life and on a national scale.

The immediate cause of the 1920 upheaval in India was the publication of the terms of the Turkish Treaty, which enraged the bulk of the Indian Muslims and drove them to adopt strong measures. The Central Khilafat Committee, which was formed to oppose the Turkish Treaty, adopted a programme of non-co-operation—the relinquishment of titles given by the Government, the boycott of schools, law courts and legislative councils, and finally the non-payment of taxes. This programme met with Mahatma Gandhi's approval, and he took the lead in a movement, in support of the Muslims, against the Treaty, and also against conditions in the Punjab. He came to the conclusion that a system of government which was responsible for what happened in the Punjab, or could flout solemn pledges, as in the case of the Khilafat, must not be tolerated any longer. He travelled up and down the country asking the people to stand by their Muslim brothers and also to vindicate the honour of the Punjab. The whole of India responded to his appeal. Tilak, too, blessed the new agitation and expressed his agreement with Gandhiji's programme except on the question of the boycott of the Legislative Councils.

In this programme there was nothing new to Tilak for he had been the high-priest of non-co-operation all his life and was the first to advocate it openly as a national policy. He had practised almost every item in the programme during his long years of agitation in the country. Were not the Deccan Education Society, the Swadeshi and Boycott movements, and, above all, the deliberate

defiance of British authority, in every instance forerunners of non-co-operation?[1]

On the question of Turkey Tilak had whole-heartedly supported the Mohammedan demand that the Ottoman Empire must be left untouched and the holy institution of the Khilafat kept inviolate. Not only did he believe that the religious feelings of the Muslims in this matter should be respected by Britain and France, but he also considered that in order to maintain the balance of power in the Middle East, Turkey should at all costs remain strong and independent. He looked at the question of Turkey from the standpoint of a political realist. Broadly speaking, he considered that the independence of Turkey was as important to India as the independence of France and Belgium on the Continent were to the British Isles. While Gandhiji's support of the Khilafat agitation was mainly emotional and moral, Tilak's support was based on a more stable foundation—considerations of the defence of India and her relations with the Middle Eastern countries.

Discussing this aspect of Turkey's independence with his friend Mr. Gangadharrao Deshpande, Tilak said: "The British have won the war and therefore they are no longer afraid that the Muslims of India will rise in rebellion. Britain is now playing for high stakes in the Middle East. By undermining or destroying the Turkish Empire she wants to control all the Muslim countries which are neighbours of India. It is in the interests of India that the Muslim Power of Turkey should remain undiminished. I think the idea of helping the Muslims in their Khilafat agitation is a sound one and Mahatma Gandhi's lead in this matter should be supported by all. He is coming to the fore with great energy and enthusiasm. And I shall have no hesitation in working with him. At the same time, mark my words, if Gandhi and I work together it will be my turn again to go to gaol before him." From this it is plain that Tilak's vision was not confined to India alone, nor was he looking at the Turkish question purely from a sentimental point of view. He thought of Indian interests in terms of international events and situations and their effect on India's political future.

Tilak's main difference with Gandhi over this programme was confined to the boycott of the Legislative Councils. He knew that the new reforms would not satisfy the people, since the real power

[1] *Tenets of the New Party*, pp. 114–15.

and responsibility still lay in the hands of government officials; he did not look upon the Councils—as the Moderates did—as something to be marvelled at and set above criticism. He maintained that Indians should enter the Councils, as this would give them an opportunity to practise the policy of responsive co-operation. By this he meant that the people's co-operation would depend on the granting of the demands of their elected representatives. If the bureaucracy did not respond to popular demands they should withhold co-operation and resort to constitutional obstruction. He did not envisage a period with no conflict between the people and the officials; on the contrary, he foresaw the possibility of many conflicts, and he wanted to use the Reform Councils as a means to greater agitation and more effective struggle. He believed that boycott of the Council by the Nationalists would prove to be political suicide, for in their absence the pro-government parties would get on to the Councils and help the Government to carry out the administration smoothly and without conflict. The Government officials would, in fact, be most happy if the Nationalists boycotted the Councils, as that would mean less bother and trouble for them.

Tilak decided to make a stand on this issue in the special Congress session arranged at Nagpur at the end of August, which had been called to consider and sanction the non-co-operation programme as a national protest against the extraordinary situation created by the Turkish Treaty and the Hunter Committee Report. He felt so keenly on this issue that he refused the high honour of presiding, so that he could be free to advocate the acceptance by the Congress of his ideas on Council entry. He was confident that he could convert Gandhi to his views.

Because of his opposition to the boycott of Councils Tilak and his Nationalist Party were much misunderstood and also misrepresented by the followers of Mahatma Gandhi, but events proved that his attitude was the correct one. The boycott of Councils proposed by Mahatma Gandhi was a complete failure. There was no lack of candidates for the Muslim or the Hindu seats on the Councils when the elections took place. The Nationalist boycott of the elections, carried out under the guidance of Gandhiji, only served to provide an opportunity for a number of undesirables—men without political convictions and sometimes, even, of dubious character—to get seats on the Councils. All that Tilak said would happen if the elections

were boycotted did in fact happen. When they realized that the boycott policy had failed, the disillusioned supporters of Gandhiji in the Special Congress at Nagpur in 1920 turned against him. They formed a new party, the "Swarajists", under the leadership of Pandit Motilal Nehru, father of Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru, and contested the 1925 elections with considerable success.

In spite of their differences of opinion it would still be fair to say that the two leaders had much in common, particularly their robust approach to politics, which would surely have helped to avoid any serious breach between them. Tilak and Gandhi had sharp differences—for instance, on the question of violence and non-violence—but they respected each other profoundly and there was never a word of indignation or rancour in their discussions. Tilak recognized in Gandhi a tremendous force for the good of the country; and many have argued rightly that had Tilak lived longer he might have brought Gandhi to accept his policy of responsive co-operation. Tilak's experience, his life of struggle and opposition to the Government, would have made it impossible for him ever to become an opponent of non-co-operation; but it is equally true that he would never have allowed the movement to run on metaphysical and abstract lines, as happened after his death. Is it unreasonable to suppose that under his inspiration and guidance the non-co-operation movement would have kept itself within the limits of normal political activity without degenerating into a sort of personal cult and a fetish?

29

THE LAST JOURNEY

Not always right in all men's eyes
But faithful to the Light within.

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

The Amritsar session of the Congress was the last time Tilak appeared on the national platform. He returned to Poona very exhausted and tired. His friends advised him to take a holiday, and one of them invited him to go to Kashmir; but Tilak preferred Sinhagarh, his favourite mountain resort, and arranged to go there to recuperate for a month or two. The political situation in the country, however, began to worsen rapidly and he was forced to postpone his holiday. The restlessness of the Muslims over the Turkish Treaty had by now reached an acute stage and the publication of the Hunter Committee Report on the Punjab tragedy added fuel to the flames. Muslim hotheads talked of an armed revolt, while others advocated a Jehad and crossed over to Afghanistan to express their disgust with the British Government. Popular feeling in the country veered towards Gandhiji's barren and futile programme and the more realistic leaders became increasingly alarmed. Every day appeals and requests came pouring in to Tilak from people seeking his advice and guidance.

In the midst of it all he attended the Astronomers' Conference at Sangli, where he brought about a long-overdue reform of the Indian Calendar. It was a great achievement for Tilak to make the orthodox section of the conference accept a more scientific basis for astronomical calculations, in harmony with the Greenwich nautical tables, for there were not a few who argued that to accept the British tables would upset Hindu religious susceptibilities. But Tilak routed the opposition by pointing out that scientific research knew no

national boundaries and had nothing to do with religion. He convinced the opponents of calendar reform that by adopting the more scientific basis they would be helping the people to observe the Hindu fasts and feasts in closer harmony with the religious ideas behind them.

After this conference he undertook a strenuous tour of the Province of Sind. Here the scorching heat and the constant travelling further undermined his health. Normally Tilak spoke rather loudly, and his roaring voice could be heard clearly by audiences of tens of thousands; but on this tour it was noticed that the powerful voice was losing its far-reaching quality; his hearing and sight were failing appreciably and his long-striding gait had also lost some of its usual agility and briskness. He felt thirsty all the time and drank a mixture of lemon and soda water. Thirsty or hungry, however, he went through the tour and addressed scores of meetings in Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkar and many wayside places. In itself his presence was inspiration enough to stir the simple Muslim peasants of the province to action. The Sindhi leader, Dr. Choitram Gidwani, who was in charge of the tour, said later, "Lokamanya Tilak brought new life and dignity to our politically backward people. Now they will proudly march side by side with their fellow Indians, with their heads erect and their faces unabashed". Politically, Tilak's tour was a great gain to Sind, but for him it was one more burden on his failing constitution.

From Hyderabad, Sind, he went directly to Sholapur where he addressed that year's Bombay Provincial Conference and explained the political programme of the new Congress Democratic Party which he was organizing to fight the elections under the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms.

In the month of May the people of Poona ceremoniously presented Tilak with a sum of Rs.300,000 (£22,500) which they had collected to enable him to pay the costs of the libel suit. Never before in Indian public life was such a large sum collected for presentation to a political leader. Indeed, it was a measure of the confidence and love the people felt for the man. In a moving speech Tilak thanked his friends and said: "By your generosity and loyalty you have literally bought me body and soul. Plainly, you want me to go on working for you, and of course I have no option now."

The next two months he spent organizing the Congress Democratic

Party so as to be able to dovetail Mahatma Gandhi's programme of non-co-operation into his own programme of responsive co-operation. In spite of the fact that Gandhiji was stumping the country campaigning for a boycott of the reforms, and gaining fresh support everywhere, Tilak still maintained that the Councils must be captured by Congressmen if the political fight was to be effective. Gandhiji feared that once the Congressmen got inside the Councils the wiles of the officials and the perquisites of office, inseparable from constitutional politics, would soon get the better of their zeal for reform. Tilak on the other hand had no such fear. Robustly optimistic and sure of the loyalty of his followers, he was confident that they could beard the lion of officialdom in his den and practise non-co-operation from inside the Councils as well as from outside. "Touch-me-not" philosophy had no place in his political programme.

But early in July he suffered from an attack of malaria. His friends became anxious and implored him again to take a holiday. He was invited to Karmale, a place renowned for its dry climate, which, it was thought, would restore him to health. But fate intervened once more. At the last moment he was called upon to fight one more legal battle in connection with the property of his ward, Jagannath, the adopted son of Tai Maharaj whose unfortunate affairs had already cost Tilak so much in anxiety, litigation, and money. Although the Privy Council in London had decided in favour of Jagannath, the Governments of Bombay and Kolhapur (an Indian State ruled by a Maharaja) conspired to deprive him of the possession of his property and a suit was filed in the High Court of Bombay. Tilak had now to devote some of his time to preparing Jagannath's defence and this entailed travelling to Bombay to instruct his counsel. In spite of the fact that he had not thrown off the attack of malaria, Tilak considered it his duty to make this journey. All through his life he had never spared himself, and had driven his body unmercifully. He did not spare himself now, but this journey at a time when he was ill, undertaken by a man whose constitution had been permanently impaired by the privations of years of prison, proved the last straw. The lawsuit in Bombay was won, but at a heavy physical cost to Tilak. The strain of preparing Maharaj's case, and then the journey to Bombay, broke Tilak's health and hastened his death.

Wednesday July 21st was a dismal day. From early in the morning it drizzled intermittently. But late in the afternoon there was a break in the clouds and Tilak went for a drive with Diwan Chaman Lal. For two hours he talked in the car about Gandhi's programme of non-co-operation and about the Indian Trade Union movement in which Chaman Lal wanted him to take an interest. Tilak said to him: "I love the working people. How can I forget their demonstrations and strikes in Bombay in 1908 when I was sentenced to transportation?" And he readily agreed to attend the trades union conference of that year. But it was not to be. This ride with Chaman Lal was to be the last outing for Tilak. He went to bed with a bad chill which developed into a high fever. For the first three days of his illness he was treated for malaria. On Friday July 23rd, his sixty-fifth birthday, he felt much better and was able to sit up in bed and receive a great number of messages of congratulations which had come from all parts of the country. He jested with his friends and told them that he was going to live another five years. He was unusually cheerful and gay, which the doctors thought was a good sign.

But from Monday July 26th his fever took a serious turn and it was found that the base of his left lung was affected. He had developed signs of pneumonia. There was, fortunately, no brain complication and his consciousness remained more or less unimpaired. Still, the situation was critical and his friends and relatives began to gather round him.

When it became known that Tilak was seriously ill the Sardar Griha was besieged by anxious callers including Mahatma Gandhi and Mohammed Ali Jinnah; crowds waited patiently in the street for news and bulletins were issued every few hours.

On Wednesday afternoon his heart began to show signs of weakness and he lost consciousness and became delirious. He continued in about the same state for the rest of the week. On Thursday at about five p.m. he had an attack of angina pectoris which might have proved fatal but for the timely efforts of his doctors. On Friday and the whole of Saturday he remained in a state of unconsciousness with an uncertain and irregular pulse and a weak heart. Dr. G. V. Deshmukh, Dr. H. R. Bhadkamkar, Dr. Velkar, Dr. D. D. Sathe, and all the best medical talent in the city gathered round Tilak's bed, but the chances of his recovery grew fainter every hour;

he was sinking rapidly. On Saturday night at about ten o'clock the doctors injected a German preparation into the spine, as their last hope; the patient did not respond and his heart began to show growing signs of exhaustion and his breathing became more difficult. The doctors could do no more, and sorrowfully they advised Tilak's family and friends to prepare themselves for the inevitable.

Tilak's dearest friend, Dadasaheb Khaparde, desperately asked Dr. Bhadkamkar if anything more could be done to save Lokamanya's life. "I am afraid not," the physician replied, "his life is now entirely in the hands of God." Khaparde had brought with him some Hemagarbha (an ancient Indian medicine made from gold and reputed to revive the dying) and carefully administered a dose to the patient. This too, failed to have any effect and Tilak died at forty minutes past midnight on Sunday August 1st, 1920.

From early in the morning enormous crowds thronged the streets in front of Sardar Griha and its approaches. On the balcony the body of Tilak was placed on a raised chair in a sitting posture. The forehead was smeared with ashes and sandalwood paste, and the dead man was covered with flowers. The reverent crowd standing on the pavement had a full view of the massive head and face stamped with the repose and peace of death.

Hundreds of men and women arrived in special trains from Poona and as the morning advanced the entire area from the Crawford Market to Dhobi Talao was filled with a dense, unhappy mass of people. Nearly all Bombay turned out to pay its homage to the departed patriot and leader.

Tilak was taken on his last journey the same evening and a funeral procession over two miles long, comprising over a quarter of a million people, followed his body. Intense grief was writ large on every face for the most dearly loved national leader India had ever known. As the procession wound along flowers were showered on the bier and mill workers and dock labourers formed bhajans, chanting devotional songs. Hindu, Parsee, Christian, Mohammedan, Brahmin and Untouchable vied with each other to pay homage to their dead leader. Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Kitchlu, Moulana Showkat Ali, N. C. Kelkar and Lajpat Rai were among the many leaders who walked in the procession as pall bearers.

The procession which had left Sardar Griha at half-past one reached the cremation ground, the famous sands known as Back

Bay on the shores of the Arabian Sea, at six o'clock. A high pyre of sandalwood stood ready on which the body was gently placed, and after the last rites had been performed, Tilak's earthly remains were consigned to the flames.

With the death of Bal Gangadhar Tilak the voice of India was hushed; the vigilant watchman of her cause had gone to his rest—the beacon light of freedom was extinguished. With Tilak passed away a whole era in Indian history.

30

TILAK: MAN OF VISION AND ACTION

> A great worker and creator is not to be judged only by the work he himself did, but also by the greater work he made possible.
>
> ARABINDO GHOSE

The thirty-six years that have passed since Tilak's death in 1920 set him at a sufficient remove in time for us to be able to assess his place in Indian history and the value of his work as a forerunner of Indian independence, without our judgment becoming blurred by emotional reflexes oscillating between prejudice and blind adulation. The uncritical admiration of some contemporary biographers of Tilak is as outmoded as the outright condemnation of his political opponents. In the period of agitation before 1920 no political figure had been so widely discussed by his contemporaries as was Tilak. The Indians called him an "Avatar", an incarnation of God's spirit; in contrast his Anglo-Indian critics called him a genius of destruction. In his lifetime Tilak was at once the object of unlimited veneration and unreasoning hatred, a man worshipped by the millions and detested by not a few. He evoked the most contradictory and mutually hostile emotions among his countrymen and the British rulers of the time.

This extraordinary situation has its roots in his extraordinary achievements.

No one has paid a truer tribute to the work, character and personality of Tilak than Mahatma Gandhi, his successor in Indian politics. And no one was perhaps better fitted to appreciate and appraise him than Gandhi, since only he was capable of reaching those same heights of sacrifice and devotion to the Motherland. Gandhi writes: "His patriotism was a passion with him. He knew no

religion but love of his country. He was a born democrat. He had an iron will which he used for his country. His life was an open book. His tastes were simple. His private life was spotlessly clean. He had dedicated his wonderful talents to his country. No man preached the gospel of Swaraj with the consistency and the insistence of Lokamanya. His countrymen therefore implicitly believed in him. His courage never failed him. His optimism was irrepressible. He had hoped to see Swaraj fully established during his lifetime. If he failed, it was not his fault. He certainly brought it nearer by many years."

In these short sentences Gandhi has summed up the career and achievements of the man who had inspired and led the thoughts, aspirations and activities of his countrymen during the vital formative period of India's modern history—a period rightly described as the Tilak Era.

What was the secret of Tilak's hold upon the minds of men? Was it his great intellect, his deep learning, his powerful personality, his aggressive statesmanship, his unfailing resourcefulness, his passionate love for his country, or his daring courage? Or was it the simplicity of his nature, the saintly private life he led, or the purity of his character? All these and much more went to make up the man Tilak. But the key to his power over the masses was not to be found in any of these attributes, considered either singly or collectively. It is to be found in his realization of the central and vital teaching of the ancient philosophy of India; the complete absence of an antithesis between the ideal and the real. As a result, Tilak's mind, intellect and perception developed an intuition which manifested itself in pure and dedicated action. For him to know the truth was to love it and to love the truth was to strive after and attain it. Every human being, as a part of the eternal spirit, has the power and ability to see the truth but very few have the courage to follow the light unflinchingly. Tilak belonged to the category of men who see the vision of truth and become possessed by it; they become possessed by that supreme passion for truth before which all baser desires fall to ashes. This clear vision of truth gave him a rare insight into the human mind and a power of detachment and concentration which made him the seer and prophet of Indian nationalism. Thus freed from bondage to material things, he was well qualified to lead the people into the promised land of liberty and independence.

Tilak's contemporaries—Ranade, Mehta, Gokhale, Bannerjee, Bhandarkar, Telang, Malaviya, Arabindo Ghose, Lajpat Rai, Pal and many others—were men of high intellect and great learning; some of them had rendered conspicuous service to the country and some had made considerable sacrifices. But none of them was the equal of Tilak. None had a spirit both as great and as untrammelled as Tilak's. Bannerjee and Mehta were burdened with the cares and worries of their families, their private fortunes and their complex relations with the foreign rulers; others were government servants; and many more were directly or indirectly dependent on the patronage of the British. Ghose, Lajpat Rai and Pal, it is true, had little in common with the Moderate leaders but they failed in some other respects.

Arabindo Ghose was a superior type of intellect. In the first flush of revolutionary activity in 1908 he shot up into the political firmament like a meteor, but could not stand the rigours of political persecution and after a short time disappeared from the political scene. He became a recluse, retired to Pondicherry and devoted the rest of his life to the study of philosophy and mysticism. Pal was a great orator and a man of lively imagination, but lacked political discipline. Laipat Rai travelled to the United States, soon after Tilak's transportation to Mandalay, and did useful work there as an Indian propagandist. His critics have charged him, not without some justification, with escapist tendencies in politics. It was easier, they said, to attack the British administration from a safe distance. Even Tilak had on occasion thought the conduct of Ghose and Lajpat Rai rather odd in that they stayed away from the battlefield. Their vision may have been clear but their action was certainly weak. One is tempted to conclude that to most of Tilak's contemporaries nationalism was at the best an intellectual concept or a political cry. However genuinely felt, it was only an aspiration. With Tilak it was a consuming passion.

Tilak was the first Indian to make a stand against Western civilization and the Western influences which had hypnotized all Indians, masses and classes alike; he was also the first to discover and expose the secret of British power—that it was not physical, but moral. In his speeches and articles on the Shivaji and Ganapati festivals, in his constant criticisms of the administration, and in his exposition of the "Tenets of the New Party", Tilak laid bare the central fact of

British supremacy in India; that it rested principally on the willing co-operation and acquiescence of the people. They accepted the alien rule, Tilak said, because they accepted without question its moral superiority. This hypnotic spell he made it his life mission to break. His purpose in organizing the New English School and the Fergusson College was to liberate the minds of young men and to train them to take their part in the realization of the national destiny. The temporizing spirit which some of his colleagues showed in following—or failing to follow—the original principles of the Deccan Education Society, made it almost impossible for him to go on as a teacher and professor. He therefore resigned and became a full-time journalist. The opportunities denied him in the Fergusson College he found in the columns of *Kesari* and from the teacher of a few hundred young men he became the Guru (supreme teacher) of a whole nation.

Tilak's was a creative genius; when the instruments ready to hand proved unsuited he created instruments of his own which opened to him a wider field of public service. His success as an editor was something of a miracle. Although *Kesari* was printed in Marathi it commanded the attention of the educated classes everywhere. Its editorial comments on the issues of the day were eagerly awaited by the people and closely followed by the Government officials. It even forced itself on the attention of the British Press; the *Globe*, *The Times*, *The Morning Post* and many other newspapers published extracts from Tilak's newspaper. *Kesari* became a force in the country which, however much they might fear or hate it, they could never afford to ignore.

Very early in his public career Tilak discovered the need for bringing a spiritual element to the politics of the country by infusing into them a religious fervour. He had seen how the Congress leaders of his time had failed to create a missionary enthusiasm for the national cause because of their spiritual surrender to an alien power and their ignorance of the true source of popular inspiration. He realized that no nation can hope to build a great and powerful movement without giving it a secure foundation in the spiritual life of the people. He achieved this vital task through the festivals of Ganapati and Shivaji which helped India to shake off her inferiority complex and reassert her personality. He knew that once the spiritual and religious springs of India's great past were revitalized

the greatness and glory of her future were assured. To him India seemed to have a character, a tradition, a personality—as distinct as the characteristics and qualities of individual men and women. What mattered to him was the preservation of those ways of living which are peculiar to India, through which alone, he said, she could rediscover her soul, her strength and attain her emancipation.

Tilak was the embodiment of the spirit and character of his own Mahratta race, "rugged, strong and sturdy people, democratic in their very fibre, keenly intelligent and practical to the very marrow; following in ideas the drive towards life and action; capable of great fervour but not emotional idealists".[1] This is Tilak to the life; and to these qualities he added the lucid simplicity of genius, intensity of purpose, and an inner strength based on conviction.

These qualities made Tilak the most representative type of the Indian people and the embodiment of India's aspirations and ideals. He trusted the people and the people trusted him and followed him implicitly. In his person India had found a new force and also its expression, a phenomenon which the British administrators of the day failed not only to appreciate, but even to understand. Britain's difficulties in India can be traced to a lack of understanding of the historic forces that were shaping the country's future under the dynamic leadership of Tilak. The bureaucrats branded him as an agitator and a rebel. What they failed to realize was that he was no ordinary malcontent but a constructive revolutionary, one of those men who give form and force to what would otherwise begin and end in futile unrest. They failed to appreciate that although he was a rebel with revolutionary aims he was not therefore necessarily an evil or evilly-disposed man. He was pro-Indian and stood for India. This they construed to mean that he was anti-British; to them his patriotism looked like high treason. They boasted of their great heritage of freedom and democracy but regarded Tilak's passion for liberty as an unforgivable crime.

Many people ask: "The British Government hounded Tilak from the day he entered public life to the end of his career, yet they treated Mahatma Gandhi so very differently in similar circumstances: Why?" The judge who sentenced Tilak in 1908 to six years' transportation used violent language against the prisoner: "It seems to me," he said, "that it must be a diseased mind, a most

[1] Babu Arabindo Ghose: An appreciation of Tilak.

perverted mind, that could say that the articles which you have written are legitimate weapons in political agitation." In exactly similar circumstances the judge who tried Mahatma Gandhi said, "I propose in passing sentence to follow the precedent of a case in many respects similar to this case that was decided some twelve years ago. I mean the case against Mr. Bal Gangadhar Tilak under the same Section." And before he finally pronounced sentence he prefaced his remarks with these words: "It will be impossible to ignore the fact that you are in a different category from any person I have ever tried or am likely to have to try. It would be impossible to ignore the fact that in the eyes of millions of your countrymen you are a great patriot and a great leader. Even those who differ from you in politics look upon you as a man of high ideals and of noble and even saintly life."

The reason for this difference in treatment could hardly be that the British Government had suddenly changed its character. It is possible that there may have been temperamental differences between the judge who tried Tilak and the one who tried Gandhi. But the real difference, in our view, lies in the change in the political climate which Tilak had brought about by his militant tactics and defiant attitude to the British Raj. He had inured the bureaucracy, as it were, to the idea of having to put up with a 'seditious' India. He had to pay the penalty of being the trumpeter of Indian freedom, rousing the people to action. The British Government was acting on the lesson contained in one of Æsop's fables: During a battle a soldier caught a man carrying a trumpet and threatened to kill him. The trumpeter pleaded that he carried no weapon and had killed nobody. To this the soldier replied, "You are the greatest enemy of them all; if it had not been for you with your trumpet the army would not have advanced against us. It is you who have incited the others. You are as guilty as they."[1] Tilak was the trumpeter of India, telling the people that the laws of the land had to be broken if liberties were to be won, or as Emerson said, "Good men must not obey laws too well."

In retrospect the attitude of the British officials towards Tilak seems extraordinarily unintelligent; but their most serious mistake was in failing to recognize the democratic basis of Tilak's leadership.

[1] In the libel case against Chirol Mr. Justice Darling actually quoted this fable and used it to fasten on Tilak the guilt for sedition.

No one before him had conceived the possibility of enlisting the masses in the Indian struggle for liberation and using mass action in the form of passive resistance. It was he who first turned for strength, help and inspiration to the common people who were, sixty years ago, little better than a helpless, inarticulate and terrified mass of humanity. It is significant that he did not approach the princes or the big landlords for help; he went to the masses, galvanized them with a new spirit, and organized them in a national movement where they contributed to the final outcome—the end of the British Raj in India and of imperialism in Asia.

A survey of the political and social forces which were shaping the future of some of the modern states of Europe and Asia from about 1880 to 1920—the period of Tilak's active political career—brings out a striking contrast between the ideals and methods of Tilak in India and of men like Bismarck, Cavour and Ito in Germany, Italy and Japan. By means of ruthless discipline and astute intrigue Bismarck raised Germany to a powerful nation and organized the Federal Union. Within a few years Germany became a dangerous competitor to England and France in trade and commerce. But Bismarck achieved this remarkable success with the help of the Princes of Bavaria, Silesia and Prussia, big landlords, and powerful industrialists (like Krupp). The roots of his strength were in the upper stratum of German society which gathered round the House of Hohenzollern. The moment the Hohenzollerns fell, the German power collapsed and Bismarck's dream of a strong and prosperous Germany came to nothing.

In Italy, Mazzini had a fundamental understanding of the democratic forces but, revolutionary idealist that he was, proved incapable of organizing them into a powerful movement. It was under the leadership of Count Cavour that Italy regained her national independence. But the peculiar circumstances then prevailing in the country forced him to co-operate with Victor Emmanuel, King of Sardinia. The aristocracy also joined in the national struggle, and so Italy gained political independence after centuries of division and foreign domination. A democratic régime of a sort was set up, but it lacked a firm foundation in the common man's consciousness of his democratic rights and responsibilities. Soon the experiment in Italy, too, failed and the power slipped back into the hands of princes, aristocrats and monopoly capitalists.

In Japan the social and political revolution was brought about, as it were, by a miracle. Overnight, by an Imperial decree the old divisions of the Japanese society were abolished; the aristocrats and the Samurai became, by a stroke of the pen, one nation, casteless and classless. Ability and not birth became the criterion for appointment in the Emperior's service. It appeared likely that a democratic and almost classless society would emerge in the land of the Rising Sun. But it soon became only too evident that social inequality cannot be abolished by a mere act of parliament or by an imperial edict, and that such acts and edicts are powerless before age-old practices and prejudices. Japanese society remained classless on paper, but in reality power began to concentrate once more in the hands of the small number of families which had dominated the country in the past. The workers and peasants remained as inarticulate and unrepresented as before.

We need not go into the later history of these nations. Every student of recent events knows that all three countries became totalitarian states and threatened the peace of the world.

Tilak, on the other hand, did not seek the help of the princes, aristocrats and landlords to regain the lost independence of India; he wooed the masses and by so doing laid the foundation of a truly democratic state. Whatever of democracy and freedom India is able to enjoy today is the fruit of Lokamanya Tilak's profound vision and dynamic action.

In his well-informed essay on *Indian Democracy* Dr. P. G. Sahasrabudhe has ably shown how every page of *Kesari* bears witness to Tilak's great concern for workers, peasants, artisans, weavers, gardeners, aborigines—all the vast numbers of the toiling masses who are the majority of the Indian people. "India means these workers and peasants," was the one theme to which Tilak returned again and again. As early as the first year of *Kesari*, 1881, Tilak wrote, "Whether a country is rich or poor, conquered or free, the majority of its inhabitants as a rule, earns its livelihood by manual labour. It cannot be said therefore that a particular country has, economically speaking, improved so long as the conditions of the toiling majority in that country have not improved."

Tilak became the idol of the people mainly because he identified himself with the poor. He understood them as no other Indian leader did. He loved the poor and helpless and was always ready to

make any sacrifice for them. It is true to say that everything that happened to India seemed to happen to him. He felt the sufferings and the sorrows of the Indian masses as if they were his own.

He worked for these masses. Their wretched condition, their thin, undernourished bodies, their disease-ridden hovels, their joyless existence haunted him day and night. He was never tired of telling the educated middle-class youth to "go to the villages, mix with the peasants and try to improve their condition". In a stirring message to the social workers he wrote in 1896, "There is no greater folly than the assumption of the educated classes that they are a separate class from the mass of the people. They must realize that they are part and parcel of the whole—the Indian masses. Their own salvation depends on the salvation of the people".

Here is Tilak's creed and testament in his own words: "I regard India as my Motherland and my Goddess, the people in India my kith and kin, and loyal and steadfast work for their political and social emancipation my highest religion and duty."

This single-minded devotion to the cause of the Indian masses was the source both of his strength and of his weakness. By temperament and circumstance he was a rebel and a revolutionary; he fought against political injustice and tyranny all through his life. His political actions and struggles, whether against his own countrymen—like the Moderate leaders—or the alien power, have a ring of sincerity and consistency which leave no room to doubt his motives. But his opposition to social reform, at least in the early part of his public career, presents a difficult problem. One dare not suggest that Tilak—endowed with a keen intellect and sensitive mind which could react instantly to the slightest political injustice done to the Indian people—could remain insensitive and apathetic to the many social injustices and inhuman customs which bedevilled Hindu society. It would be equally preposterous to doubt his courage to face the people's opposition if he had decided to join hands with Agarkar and Ranade in their crusade for social reform. There is no doubt that the Social Reform Party was keenly disappointed in Tilak's attitude. They were fully conscious of the extraordinary hold he had on the masses; one word from him would have changed popular hostility to reform into friendly co-operation. But Tilak did not say the word. The irony of the situation is that he was at heart no less ardent a reformer than Ranade and his followers.

His opponents accused him of hypocrisy and chicanery but the charge falls to the ground when a study is made of the socio-political set-up of the time.

K. V. Godbole has pointed out that Tilak's opposition to social reform was more apparent than real. He was not blind to social evils and injustices and would never have tolerated them in a free India. But he was convinced that the emancipation of the country must have the first priority in his national programme, for without it social reform could make no real headway. And to prepare the masses for a sustained fight against a powerful government he considered it vital for the people's party to remain absolutely free from any suspicion of being in collusion with leaders who could be described as "King's men". In reality, were not leaders like Bhandarkar, Ranade and Gokhale playing the courtier in Indian politics? Had not their feeble behaviour and their faith in British rule as God-given cut them off from the masses? Did not Gokhale tender an abject apology to the Government for some remarks of his in England about the Plague administration, although some of his friends were ready to stand by him and produce evidence to support every single one of his statements? Tilak's support of the Social Reform Party would have been construed by the people as support for men like Gokhale who had forfeited the people's confidence and trust. Was it unnatural then for Tilak to keep away from the social reformers and concentrate on his own programme of organizing and consolidating the people for their political independence? True, the Bhandarkars and Ranades would probably have profited from Tilak's support for their social programme, but could they in return have given their support to Tilak's aggressive nationalism and made common cause with him in his fight for political freedom? Even their best friends would not care to say they would. In the circumstances who can blame Tilak if he thought it best not to become entangled with the Reform Party and so run the risk of dividing the popular forces and dissipating the nation's strength?

This is a perfectly legitimate defence of Tilak's attitude to social reform and one must accept it, particularly as it relates to the peculiar social and political conditions that prevailed up to Tilak's transportation and long exile in 1908. But this defence begins to wear thin after his release and return from Mandalay. We cannot

ignore the fact that his sacrifices and sufferings in the service of his country gave him such a high position and authority after 1915 that there was no danger of the people misunderstanding his action, if he had cared to come out more openly in support of social reform. Indeed, in the last two or three years before his death Tilak did speak for social reform and particularly for the removal of untouchability, when he declared that he would refuse to acknowledge God if he thought that He sanctioned the vile practice of treating a section of the community as sub-human. But one is forced to admit that he never felt the same moral fervour and enthusiasm for social reform which he felt for the cause of political independence. This was perhaps partly due, as some critics have claimed, to the narrow religious influences which prevailed in and around Poona. Tilak's main centre of activity. Believing that the division or energies means the dissipation of energies, he made his choice—to the exclusion of every other consideration—of working for the political emancipation of the country. It is unfair therefore to judge the value of his service to India by what he did not do. He made the liberation of his Motherland his life's mission and staked everything —his fortune, his personal comfort, his family life, his scholarship, his health, time and energy. He lived only to give to Mother India whatever he possessed; no sacrifice was too great for him and no suffering too heavy. If ever there was a man who lived a dedicated life it was Lokamanya Tilak.

Who can deny that Tilak's personality has made an indelible mark on the modern political thought and development of India? It is his work stretching over forty years which made it possible for Mahatma Gandhi to push on the task of nation-building and to crown it with the attainment of independence. He did not live to see the Swaraj of his dream materialize, but is it possible to think of India's independence without recalling the stupendous pioneering efforts of Tilak? Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru were able to rear the grand edifice of Swaraj in the sure knowledge that the foundation was well and truly laid in the sweat and blood of Lokamanya Tilak.

31

TILAK'S LITERARY WORK

> The field of politics to which Mr. Tilak devoted the best years of his life was not the one for which he was made. He was by nature a scholar and only by necessity a politician.
>
> DR. S. RADHAKRISHNAN

His restless energy and his fearless fight against foreign domination have tended to overshadow Tilak's literary achievements. It is true that the major part of his life was devoted to politics, earning for him a unique position in the modern history of India, but the emphasis on his political work must not be allowed to blur our view of his significant contributions to research on the antiquity of the Vedas and the great philosophical treatise he wrote on the Bhagawad Gita—his *magnum opus* the *Gita Rahasya.* In these works we find his mind probing into uncommon subjects and presenting to the world conclusions which have undoubtedly enriched the stock of human knowledge and in some ways revolutionized the methods of research and higher criticism.

Tilak will be remembered as a political leader but his real genius lay in literary work. He was never so happy as when he was surrounded by books and working on his favourite themes of Vedic antiquity and Indian philosophy. Politics in Tilak's times was not only exacting but exhausting; in many ways it was also exclusive. This mistress, politics, did not brook a rival and yet Tilak succeeded in making valuable contributions to oriental studies, a fact which speaks for his wide range of interests, great learning and industry. Strange as it may seem, his greatest antagonist, the British Government in India, helped him most in his scholarly work by forcibly retiring him from public life behind prison bars. "The prison cell was the place where his brave soul could pursue its congenial

vocation. In the ten years of enforced leisure spent in Mandalay and elsewhere Mr. Tilak did his best literary work by which he will be remembered even after his fame as a politician grows dim."[1]

Tilak's natural aptitude for mathematics and Sanskrit led him into Oriental research. While his most important investigations were in the domain of the Vedas and the Bhagawad Gita, he also wrote copiously on allied subjects. Among such writings his essay on *A Missing Verse in the Sankhya Karikas* is regarded by scholars as a notable contribution to the interpretation of Sankhya philosophy.

His first essay in search of the antiquity of the Vedas was published in 1893 under the title *Orion*. With the help of his deep knowledge of astronomy he attacked the accepted Western theory that the Vedas could not be older than 2400 B.C. He argued that the hymns of the Rigveda, those at any rate which referred to Agrayana or Agrahayana, must have been composed when the year began with the Sun in the constellation of Mrigashirsha or Orion, i.e. before 4000 B.C. In support of his theory Tilak cites old traditions of the Parsees and the Greeks which are strikingly similar to traditions mentioned in the oldest Vedic works; in particular he infers from the Greek legend of Orion (the name Orion has the same root as the Greek word for "beginning") that these legends arose during the period before the Greeks separated from the Hindus.

Tilak's theory, which put the antiquity of the Vedas—and therefore the antiquity of the Aryan civilization—back to 4000–5000 B.C. startled the Western world. But the masterly way in which he argued his case and the weight of evidence he produced in support of his theory forced many sceptical spirits to admit that the theory was substantially sound and must therefore be reckoned with. Eminent scholars in Europe and America praised Tilak's work highly—Max Muller, Jacobi, and Webber were particularly appreciative of the author's learning and originality. Dr. Bloomfield of John Hopkins University in an anniversary address spoke of Tilak's book as "unquestionably the literary sensation of the year. History, the chronic readjuster, will have her hands uncommonly full to assimilate the results of Tilak's discovery and arrange her paraphernalia in the new perspective". He has recorded his reactions on receiving

[1] Dr. S. Radhakrishnan in *Eminent Orientalists*.

Orion. He glanced through the introduction, where Tilak "blandly informs us that the age of the Rigveda cannot be less than 4000 B.C. and that the express records of the early Hindu antiquity point back to 6000 B.C. Having in mind the boundless fancy of the Hindu through the ages and his particularly fatal facility for 'taking his mouthful' when it comes to a question of numbers, I proposed to myself to continue to turn the leaves of the book with the amused smile of orthodoxy befitting the occasion. But soon the amused smile gave way to an uneasy sense that something unusual had happened. I was first impressed with something leonine in the way in which the author controlled the Vedic literature and the occidental works on the subject; my superficial reading soon gave way to absorbed study and finally, having been prepared to scoff mildly, I confess that the author had convinced me in all the essential points".

Ten years elapsed before Tilak published, in 1903, a sequel to the *Orion*, called *The Arctic Home in the Vedas*. In this book he tried to prove that the North Polar region was the original home of the Aryans. His conclusions were based on his Vedic research, supported by recent discoveries in geology and archaeology. The arctic regions, though now desolate and unfit for human habitation, enjoyed, before the glacial epoch, a mild and temperate climate. There are references in the Vedas to astronomical phenomena peculiar to the North Pole such as night and day each of six months' duration. On the hypothesis of a long night of six months Tilak lucidly explains the anxious wait for the dawn and the rapturous utterances upon its arrival. Corroborative evidence from the Zendavesta, the sacred book of the Parsees, is also cited.

The principal theme of *The Arctic Home in the Vedas* can be stated in Tilak's own words: "The beginnings of Aryan civilization must be supposed to date back several thousand years before the oldest Vedic period; and when the commencement of the post-glacial epoch is brought down to 8000 B.C. it is not at all surprising if the date of primitive Aryan life is found to go back to it from 4500 B.C., the age of the oldest Vedic period. In fact, it is the main point which the present volume seeks to establish. There are many passages in the 'Rigveda', which, though hitherto looked upon as obscure and unintelligible, do, when interpreted in the light of recent scientific researches, plainly disclose the Polar attributes of

the Vedic deities, or the traces of an ancient Arctic calendar; while the Avesta expressly tells us that the happy land of Airyana Vaejo, or the Aryan Paradise, was located in a region where the sun shone but once a year, and that it was destroyed by the invasion of snow and ice, which rendered its climate inclement and necessitated a migration southward. These are plain and simple statements, and when we put them side by side with what we know of the glacial and the post-glacial epochs from the latest geological researches we cannot avoid the conclusion that the primitive Aryan home was both Arctic and inter-glacial."

Tilak's theory about the Arctic home of the Aryans was so startling in its nature that it did not gain easy acceptance by scholars, though it was acknowledged that he had made out a strong case. The most important testimony came from Dr. F. W. Warren, author of *Paradise Found* and President of Boston University, who wrote in the *Open Court Magazine* of Chicago: "In the judgment of the present writer the array of evidence set forth is far more conclusive than any ever attempted by an Indo-Iranian scholar in the interests of any earlier hypothesis. Absolute candour and respect for the strictest methods of historical and scientific investigation characterize the discussion throughout. This results in part, no doubt, from the fact that the author's own attitude of mind was at the outset highly sceptical. He says: 'I did not start with any preconceived notion in favour of the Arctic theory; nay, I regarded it as highly improbable at first; but the accumulating evidence in its support eventually forced me to accept it.'" Dr. Warren concludes: "It is hard to see how any candid mind can master the proof produced without being mastered by it in turn. Whoever will master this new work, and that of the late Mr. John O'Neill on *The Night of the Gods* will not be likely ever again to ask, where was the earliest home of the Aryans?"

Orion and *The Arctic Home in the Vedas* established Tilak's reputation as a scholar with an unusual insight and understanding of Vedic literature, and many Orientalists expressed the hope that he would continue his work of unravelling mankind's past and add to the stock of knowledge on subjects which can be tackled only by men of his calibre and breadth of vision. Whether or no his theories about the antiquity of the Vedas and the original home of the Aryan race stand up to the test of time and scientific research, there can be no

two opinions that his writings have influenced and helped the course of Indo-Iranian research and opened new, wide vistas in this field. It is a tribute to Tilak's work that so far no scholar of eminence has made any serious attempt to refute his conclusions; this suggests that, on the evidence and data at present available Tilak has said the last word.

Tilak's other contributions in the same field are his essays on Vedang Jyotish, or Vedic chronology and calendar calculations in the Vedas.

These books were written and published in English and consequently attracted the attention of the outside world. But the philosophical work *Gita Rahasya*, which he wrote in Mandalay Jail and to which a brief reference has been made, is undoubtedly his greatest contribution to philosophical thought though it has, as yet, not caught the eye of Western scholars.[1]

Curiously enough, *Orion* and its sequel *The Arctic Home in the Vedas* would probably have never been written but for Tilak's study of the Gita. In the preface to *Orion* he mentions that the words "Māsānām Mārgasirso'ham" in the Gita first led him to Vedic research which in turn yielded the vital discovery that Mrigasirsa in the Rigveda and the Orion of Greek legend were the same. Having stumbled on this valuable clue, Tilak's ever-questing mind dug deeper still into the Vedas and discovered the Arctic Home of the Aryans.

Tilak himself has told us how at a very early age, when he was a boy, he came under the influence of the teachings of the Gita. "I was often told by my elders," he says, "that a strictly religious and really philosophical life was incompatible with the everyday humdrum life." To attain the highest state of spiritual realization, they told him, one must divest oneself of all earthly desires and renounce this world. If this was true, the logical conclusion would be that the sooner one quitted this world the better. This set him thinking: "Does my religion want me to renounce the world even before I have attempted to attain the perfection of manhood?" A terrifying thought indeed! But then the same elders told him that the Bhagawad Gita was a book which contained all the answers to the doubts and difficulties that confront man in his life on earth. Tilak

[1] *Gita Rahasya* is now available in English translation by Dr. B. S. Sukthankar and published in two volumes by Tilak Bros., Poona 2, India.

thought he would probably find a solution to his dilemma in this book and so began its study.[1]

He wrote the *Gita Rahasya* in 1910 in 108 days (although he was not able to publish it until June 1915, when he came out of jail). Thus, he must have been thinking and pondering over the meaning and message of the Gita for over forty years before he wrote down his views on it. The conclusion he reached after a prolonged study was that the Gita "advocates the performance of Action in this world even after the actor has achieved his union with the Supreme Spirit by knowledge or devotion and that Action is necessary to keep the world moving along the right path of evolution, which the Creator has destined the world to follow."

As we have seen, Tilak started his study of the Gita to find an answer to the problem whether it was necessary to renounce the world in order to attain divine bliss and peace. In search of a solution he read all the learned expositions of the Gita both from the East and the West but got no satisfaction from any of them. He found that the various commentators had all approached the Gita with preconceived ideas: "They do not want to know what the Gita says but want to find out if there are any principles in the Gita which will support their own pet theories or ideas." Tilak discarded them all and approached the book with an open mind, "prepossessed by no previous ideas about any system of philosophy" as he had no

[1] A brief note on the theme of the Gita may be useful to the reader. The rightful King of the land has been deprived of his kingdom by a tyrannous usurper. His younger brother, Arjuna, sets out to restore him to the throne and destroy the tyrant, for it was his duty (Dharma) as a Kshatriya (warrior) to fight for the deliverance of his people and restore peace in the land. But the sight of former comrades and friends and loved relatives ranged against each other in civil war wrung Arjuna's heart with anguish and gave rise in his mind to doubts and conflicts about his duty, and about the right course he should follow. Among the enemy ranks were his venerable teachers and the elders at whose feet he had spent such a happy childhood. Should he now kill them in battle and trample on ties of kindred? To break family ties was a sin; to abandon the people to cruel oppression was also a sin. What should he do? Where was the right way? To free the people from bondage and thus re-establish justice and order was his natural duty and to accomplish this he must fight and slay; but how to slay without sin? The answer to this dilemma is the burden of the Gita: Do the duty imposed by destiny; realize that God, at once Lord and Law, is the doer working out the mighty evolution which ends in peace; be united and completely identified with the Supreme Spirit by devotion and knowledge and perform duty as duty, fighting the battle without passion or desire, without hatred or anger. Thus performed, action is sinless, Yoga (union with the Supreme Spirit) is accomplished and the soul is free.

theory of his own for which he sought support in the Gita. This scrupulously objective approach led him to the conclusion that the main theme of the Gita was the Activist philosophy of life. In the *Gita Rahasya* he has exhaustively examined the various philosophical systems propounded by Socrates, Plato and Aristotle in ancient Greece, and Mill, Bentham, Green, Spencer, Comte, Kant, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer and others in the modern world. He compares them with the great philosophies of the East: those of Buddha, Shankar and Ramanuja in India and that of Confucius in China; and all of them to the ethical and metaphysical principles embodied in the Gita.

He does not blindly accept what is already established; nor does he slavishly adhere to authorities, either Western or Eastern, in the interpretation and exposition of the Gita. A rigid rationalist by conviction he applies a simple but convincing test to prove his theory. The test which he applies to the Gita is to examine its beginning and its end. The Gita begins with the arrival of Arjuna on the battlefield to fight the enemy. At the crucial moment he is assailed by doubts and perplexities as to his duty, and is plunged into confusion and dejection. On the one hand the religion of the warrior was bidding him, "Fight!" and on the other hand, devotion to his teachers, love for his relatives and other natural bonds were holding him back. If he fought he would be killing his own kith and kin; if he did not he would be failing in his duty as a warrior. The strain of making the decision proves too great for him. He becomes faint, the bow drops from his hand and he falls to the ground, crying, "I shall not fight! It would be better for me to be a beggar, crying for food to stay my hunger, than to win the kingdom by committing such terrible sins as killing my own relatives and wiping out the whole clan. It does not matter if my enemies, seeing me unarmed at this moment, come and kill me; I do not wish to enjoy a happiness which is steeped in the blood of my brethren killed in warfare and burdened with their curses. It is true that it is my duty to follow the warrior religion, but if on that account I have to commit such terrible sins as killing my own people then let the warrior-religion and the warrior-morality go to perdition". With his conscience disturbed by these problems and uncertain as to his duty, he surrenders to Shri Krishna and begs him to show him the right path—"I am your pupil, please guide me." Shri Krishna counsels Arjuna what to do;

and the confused warrior throws off his depression, takes up his bow, fights the enemy and wins the battle.

The Gita is the discourse between Arjuna and Shri Krishna. It ranges widely over the spiritual, moral and metaphysical aspects of life, leading to man's ultimate development and fulfilment in unity with God. It deals with man and his place in the cosmos; his duty to his fellow beings; the right and wrong approach to creation around him; the consideration of the forces of good and evil; the principle of Lokasamgraha, or the greatest good of the greatest number; violence and non-violence; truth and untruth—absolute and conditional; meritorious and sinful conduct; and a whole host of bewilderingly complex and intricate relationships which man must enter into in his mortal existence and their effect on his life hereafter. The sum total of this philosophical discourse is to impress upon Arjuna the importance of so conducting himself in this world that he can ultimately reach the highest stage of human development and become one with Brahman or the Supreme Spirit. Shri Krishna expounds three ways of reaching this stage of perfection; by knowledge through meditation, through devotion, and through the performance of one's duty. All the paths are of equal importance and value in the spiritual development of man and any one of them will enable him to reach the final stage of Moksha (freedom from worldly bondage) and the state of eternal, true bliss.

Tilak accepts all this. The main—and fundamental—difference between him and other commentators on the interpretation of the Gita lies in the answer to this question: Is a person who has attained the highest state of perfection by following any one of the ways, under an obligation to work for the world? Great philosophers and thinkers like Shankar and Ramanuja have maintained that a liberated soul (Muktāmā) has no need to perform any worldy activity. They hold that man's highest duty is to himself, namely to strive for spiritual development, which would lead him to the fulfilment of his union with the Brahman. Once that union or oneness is attained he is free from all obligation. This is the doctrine of Sanyas or complete renunciation. Tilak maintains that this doctrine is contrary to the fundamental concept and origin of the cosmos which is willed into existence by the Brahman. Action or Duty is part of the Divine Will and the liberated soul cannot escape it. There is a vital difference, however, between the Action of an

unliberated soul and the Action of the liberated soul. The first is actuated by worldly desires and is attached to the fruits of his Action, which may lead to possession, greed, anger, hatred and conflict. The Action of the second is pure, performed in a spirit of dedication and therefore without desire and attachment to the fruits of Action. His Action is not undertaken for his own benefit but solely to fulfil the Divine Will, the primeval Energy which is the cause as well as the effect of the cosmos.

This conclusion differs from almost all other commentators, who have given their judgment in favour of complete inaction once the individual has attained Moksha (freedom from worldly bondage) and unity with the Eternal Spirit. Tilak believes: "There is a fundamental unity underlying the Logos, Man, and the World. The world exists and continues to exist because the Logos has willed it so. It is His Will that holds it together. Man strives to gain union with God; and when this union is achieved, the individual will merges in the Universal Will." If man seeks unity with God he must necessarily seek unity with the world around him and work for it. If he does not, then his unity with God is imperfect, "because there is union only between two elements (Man and God) out of three, the third element—the World—being left out. And no unity is perfect except the unity of the fundamental trinity." He declares: "I have thus solved the question for myself and I hold that serving the world and thus serving His Will, is the surest way of salvation, which can be achieved by remaining *in* the World and not going away from it."

The whole setting and tenor of the Gita supports Tilak's view. As a result of Shri Krishna's teaching Arjuna does not retire to the woods to contemplate the Eternal but goes into action. The message of Gita enables him to realize that it is not action that is forbidden but interested action. It is wrong to shrink from one's appointed duty, afraid of the consequences. "The Gita asks us to work in imitation of the Lord, for the purpose of Lokasamgraha or the greatest good of the greatest number—the unification of humanity in universal sympathy. The Gita is designed to provide a solution to all human problems. It reconciles and harmonizes spiritual freedom with work in the world."

This activist philosophy of the Gita Tilak not only preached but practised throughout his life. His bold stand against making wisdom

or Jnana an end in itself and, instead, establishing the supremacy of Karma, or Action, over all other forms of Divine worship provides a novel theme in philosophy and has profoundly influenced eminent thinkers in India. Whether the author of the *Gita Rahasya* had meant it or not, his message has given young India a new ideal to work for, the ideal of selfless and disinterested service to humanity.

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